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MODERN WATER-COLOUR



Size of drawing, 30 x 21.

THE SILENCE OF NIGHT

From the water-colour by Romilly Fedden.

[Frontispiece.]

MODERN WATER-COLOUR

INCLUDING SOME CHAPTERS ON
CURRENT-DAY ART

BY ROMILLY FEDDEN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON
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AN EXCUSE AND AN INSCRIPTION

MUCH of the training to-day is too academic ; a fixed course of study is mapped out, a definite line of progression prescribed, outside of which the student gropes in vain for some practical help to a freer expression of individuality. This short book is the outcome of a desire to help the student to some things which have taken most of us years to find out for ourselves. It has no literary pretensions, but it aims to set forth, however haltingly and colloquially, through the unfamiliar medium of the pen, a painter's ideas and opinions. It is the outcome of experience rather than of theory.

I have endeavoured more or less to confine technicality to the latter half of these pages, hoping thus to lure a few of those who are not painters into the first chapters and even on to the discovery that painting in general is something more than a polite accomplishment, and that modern water-colour in particular is a more serious and a greater Art than many

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of the pictures in our overcrowded drawing-rooms would lead us to suppose.

To all those who have worked with me in some of the out-of-the-way corners of the world, whom I have tried to help in their work, and who have certainly helped me in mine, I inscribe this book.

R. F.

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MODERN WATER-COLOUR

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF MODERN WATER-COLOUR

IF we start to trace back the use of water-colour to its original source, we find we have set out on a long journey, for we discover this medium in the illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages and further back still on the papyrus rolls of ancient Egypt. But both in the papyrus and in the medieval vellum we shall probably find but little actual connection with what we now understand as water-colour drawing, which is rather an outcome of the drawings by painters in the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries executed in various media as studies for larger pictures or simply as decorative designs or cartoons. The real development of the technique of the water-colour drawing did not begin until the eighteenth century, when it was worked out, for the most part in England, by certain painters, of whom the most famous were Paul Sandby and John Robert Cozens.

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Previous to this time the water-colour drawing had not only been carefully outlined, but also shaded with black or grey throughout. Each of its component parts was worked up in monotone and then individually stained or tinted, a transparent wash of cool grey being used for the sky and distance and a comparatively warm tone of brown for the foreground. The result arrived at was something similar in appearance to a colour print and as false in tone as a coloured photograph.

The men before Sandby may be said to have been topographers, pure and simple. Indeed we find that Sandby and Cozens aimed rather at the improvement of the existing method of tinting drawings, than at anything in the nature of innovation. According to modern ideas they were merely illustrative draughtsmen whose "views" were intended primarily for reproduction by means of copper-plate engraving, the connection between print and original being the reverse of the relation which exists to-day. Nowadays the cheap reproduction holds a very secondary place to the original work, but in the earlier part of the eighteenth century the reproduction was in most cases all that counted. Drawings were made solely for the use of the engravers, and they had little or no monetary value.

At this time publishers were offering these

engravings in book form, and they were in great demand amongst "polite society." At our Universities, the college dignitaries vied with each other in their collections of copper-plate engravings, and the country squire wanted an imposing portrait of his house, along with the seats of the local nobility—in a volume, to place upon his table.

A popular work of this kind was the *Britannia Illustrata*, which comprised "Views of the Principal Seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain curiously engraven on 80 copper plates." In the second volume we find the following ingenuous "Note":

"There is a Third Volume in hand, any gentleman paying five guineas toward the Graving, may have their Seat inserted, it being very forward, which is only half what the former paid."

These draughtsmen claim our notice because they were more skilled in their craft than the men who preceded them, and also because they carried topographical drawing to its highest perfection and, by exhausting its limited possibilities, cleared the way for the pictorial departure of the greater painters who were then rising into prominence. We notice that "drawings" at this time were beginning to be more varied. Hitherto the entire picture had been

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outlined—a brown ink being used for the nearer objects, and the distance mapped out in grey; over this structure various tints were superimposed. So thorough had been the pen-work that in many cases if the colour had been removed, a very comprehensive picture would have remained.

But now the pen began to give way before the brush. The brown foreground was less in evidence; the tints were less flat and conventional. A certain amount of modelling was introduced. An attempt was made at chiaroscuro in which the firm outline still played an important part together with the new element of colour.

Form and colour were thus gradually taking the place of mapped outline and neutral tint. Painters were beginning to depend rather less on formula and a little more on individual expression. For now we discover the work of a young painter who was converting many other painters to his broader outlook, who was treating water-colour as no one before had ever imagined it could be treated. To Thomas Girtin, who was born in 1775 and who died at the early age of twenty-seven, is due the distinction of creating the beginnings of water-colour as we know it to-day; a pictorial art dealing with the tones and colours of nature and executed in coloured paint rather than in tinted monochrome. Wherever we may choose

to place Girtin with regard to the painters who came after him, we must acknowledge him as an innovator in his day. Not only was he the discoverer of undreamed-of potentialities in water-colour, but he was capable of withstanding much of the fixed idea and method of his time.

The evolution of this art was nevertheless very slow and halting. Its painters, for the most part, were still bound by a stereotyped mannerism. At rare intervals they produced strong individual work in colour and then harked back to the tinted and outlined methods of orthodoxy. Gradually these gave way to a broader outlook, and realism diffidently began to take the place of conventionalism.

This brings us to the early part of the nineteenth century, into the midst of the men who formed a school of their own, setting up their easels in the open, and faithfully rendering nature in beautiful and delicate work. If their outlook was still somewhat limited, it was the honest expression of their age. These men were the chief exponents of what is now known as "the water-colour drawing." They have given us our national tradition in water-colour. Cotman, David Cox, Prout, De Wint, and their contemporaries have made it famous as a peculiarly English Art.

Turner, here, seems incongruous with the

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painters of his time, because he, like all men of genius, stepped beyond his time. He constantly worked with Girtin, and doubtless was much influenced by the masterly confidence, reason and inventive power of his colleague. There can be no question that had Girtin and Turner died in the same year the verdict of posterity would have placed Girtin very far ahead of his companion. "If Girtin had lived I should have starved," said Turner. Both these painters were in front of their age, yet even the great Turner had one foot behind him. We find many of his sketches are simply outlines filled in with tints of colour, drawings which were undoubtedly influenced by the tentative methods of the earlier water-colourists. But we also find that Turner often forgot his environment. He created his own methods. He broke through all preconceived rules and arrived at results which can technically vie with those of the most modern water-colour.

This leads us to the question, what is modern water-colour? The answer is not as simple as we might suppose, for as there is much that is surprisingly modern in some of the work of the older masters, so there is much that is antiquated in the feeling of three-quarters of the water-colour work of to-day.

So the answer to the question must resolve itself into some more satisfactory definition



Size of drawing 19 × 13 inches.

TWICKENHAM FERRY.

From the water-colour drawing by Thomas Girtin, in the possession of John Murray.

than one of date. I would venture to suggest that it is largely a question of technique; that modern water-colour painting has developed from water-colour drawing; that this medium, which was principally confined by artist and critic to the purposes of sketching, of taking topographical mementoes, or supplying innocent diversion to the young person, has developed unsuspected possibilities; that water-colour drawing, however charming in its delicacy, has made way for a form of the art which is infinitely more robust and spontaneous.

To-day we find that the best work in water-colour can hold its own with all contemporary painting in other mediums. Not only is it permanent and reliable, but it possesses qualities of transparency and brilliancy which are unrivalled. It is only within recent years that this medium has received much serious attention from the painter and consequently from the colour manufacturer. Fifty years ago the water-colour painter was often forced to select, grind, and mix his own pigments, rather than rely on those he could then obtain from his colourman. To-day the chemistry and manufacturing of water-colour has become an exact science which has its special experts who have not only improved the paints formerly in use, but have brought to light many new and reliable colours.

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The early English water-colourists had no alternative but to paint with poor and insufficient colours. We must, however, recognise the fact that many of the colours then available have to a certain extent changed and altered in appearance since the time at which they were applied to the paper, and we need not suppose that all trees were then seen as indigo blue and the reflections in water as Indian red, or that everyone at that time was unconscious that shadows had colour and that green looked fresh and translucent in spring. Yet undoubtedly these painters saw nature through the proscribed vision of their time. Undoubtedly they painted beautifully, but through a beautiful formula, and they have handed down to us a mannerism. This, literally so, because our critics, realising the charm of this early work, have formulated its methods into rules for our guidance, insisting on its standards as the only right ones and on its technique as the most appropriate to the medium. This has brought into existence the imitative old English water-colour, which to-day we see in some of our modern exhibitions, outlined with a pen in places, washed in with the old rusty tints; even painted on a ground which is a reproduction of the old paper that was used in the eighteenth century, extraordinarily like an early water-colour, yet

extraordinarily lacking in all its charm and finesse.

The modern water-colour, on the other hand, does not inherit its technique from an old school, but is essentially the expression of its own age. Its tendencies have to a certain extent been directed by the influence of the French Impressionists as well as by the theories and ideas of other great painters of its time, who for the most part happened to be workers in another medium. Only very few water-colours were produced by the Impressionists, who, as a school, were pre-eminently painters in oil, yet we shall find their trend of thought more in sympathy with modern water-colour than was that of the early English school.

In trying to explain the growth of modern water-colour, examples would be much better than attempted definitions, yet unfortunately we have no public gallery where water-colour is adequately represented. Most of the best modern work is only to be seen in private collections. In falling back on South Kensington Museum the student will find masses of bad pictures and also one or two of great interest. He may be disappointed in many of the examples of the earlier work, yet he can at least examine "The Little Bull Fight," by Arthur Melville, which is an admirable example of the modern. This picture is possibly not as great as some of

the work which this artist produced, but it is most typical of the power and strength and freshness of technique of which this medium is capable.

Again the water-colours of Whistler and Sargent may be cited as examples of the modern development of the art. Yet their works are totally diverse. Each of these painters has been actuated by different branches of the technique and has explored it in different directions, but each has held a like desire for individual expression and has fearlessly mastered his medium. There is no fixed technique, such as that by which we have learned to recognise the early school, by which we can distinguish modern water-colour, or rather it is distinguished only by untrammelled methods. Its technique has broadened and so become stronger. The modern painter is growing more confident of his medium. He has thrown aside the safe recipe for making skies and the correct touch for depicting foliage. He is no longer striving to express water-colour but only to express himself. He has let himself go, realising that however difficult is his medium, it will not be coaxed or temporised with. He is learning to become the master. He is learning to hit straight from the shoulder and not to pat.



Size of drawing, 30 x 20.

THE LITTLE BULL-FIGHT

By Arthur Melville. In the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

[To face page 10.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS A GOOD PICTURE ?

MANY writers have technically discoursed upon modern painting, dealing at length with this or that school, touching here on some method, there on some vogue, and, in so doing, have possibly elucidated certain facts in the mind of the initiate, of the artist, but have left the man in the street completely in the dark. My intention here is somewhat different. To the connoisseur of the rare and curious in painting, to the collector who collects pictures as the philatelist collects stamps, to those dealers who believe that a work is great simply because it is a triumph of technique, and to the public which expects imitation in pictorial art—to all these this chapter will have no meaning. It is rather for the conscientious layman—to whom painting, and more especially modern painting, is an enigma, and who is anxious to clear his mind of false standards and popular delusions—that I would here try to define what goes to the making of a good picture.

We may summarise these requisites as follows : composition, value, drawing, and colour.

Composition is a sense of balance, which results in harmony ; a happy placing of objects, not only with regard to each other, but also in their relation to the lines of the frame which contains them.

Value is the relation of one tone to another by which the artist translates the lights and darks which he sees around him, in a relative scale upon his canvas.

Drawing is the expression of form ; and colour is, we believe, indefinable.

Drawing and what we understand as colour are rarely found in an equal degree in the work of the same man. In a picture which is absolutely satisfying in drawing we are generally aware of a lack of fine colour, and when the colour-sense is paramount that of form is only subservient. It would seem that the gods, having bequeathed one of these gifts to a man, felt they had done enough for him, and so withheld the other.

Now to these four requisites, composition, colour, form, and value, we must add two more which are absolutely essential to fine painting—*i.e.* character and repose. Every great picture is stamped with the personality of its creator which gives it its character. The artist's aim in painting should be the faithful expression of

individual vision, for it is his personality alone which makes his art. He paints to express his impressions. He makes use of a material means to this end. He works in an imperfect medium, but the only one in which these particular impressions can be recorded.

Repose can be defined as a quality imparting a sense of serenity and suggestive of arrested action. It is not attained through technique or through any special method of painting, nor is it in any way affected by subject. We find it in the moving figures of Rembrandt's "Night Watch" no less than in Millet's "Angelus." This quality may be applied as a test to any work under discussion, for it is always to be found in the great pictures of all eras.

These requisites are essential to a good picture. But does the public yet understand what a good picture is ?

The public have more or less investigated the tools of the artist, the medium by which he creates ; but of the purpose in his creation they are still abundantly ignorant.

At the outset I would point out that a fine picture is not a copy of nature, but an interpretation. At the same time I would keep strongly in view the fact that, however debarred from photographic literalness such work must be, it has its own exacting standards. These standards are possibly more negative than

positive, and to understand them it will first be necessary to clear our minds of false conceptions of art.

No archæological or historical interest of subject can in any degree add to the artistic value of a picture, nor can its worth be enhanced by any literary adjunct. Any story that a picture may tell the public cannot in the slightest degree affect it as a work of art ; in fact, anecdotal frill tends to detract from a painter's work, insomuch as it is apt to obliterate the purpose of art to the beholder and leave him only occupied with its literary circumstance. The plastic arts must always be distinct and apart from the art of literature.

The art of music has, on the contrary, undoubtedly a place both in writing and painting ; we find it in fine poetry and prose, and in no less degree in the rhythm and balance, the values and syntheticism of a fine picture. No foot-rule measurements of literal exactitude can ever be applied to pictorial art. We should try to see a picture as it would appear to us as a whole in nature ; not as we know the separate objects to be in fact. We must learn to see with our eyes rather than with our reasoning faculty.

Among the popular ideas that have a currency in spite of being absolutely false is the delusion that what is beautiful in nature must of necessity be beautiful in art ; or, to put it inversely,

if an object be ugly in nature, it must therefore be ugly in a picture. A picture is only ugly when it is unconvincing and vapid, when it is lacking in necessary plastic qualities. It is only ugly when it is untrue.

Art lies not in the thing transcribed but in the transcription; and if this transcription be false and characterless, it ceases to be a work of art.

I believe this misleading convention as to ugliness in art as applied to nature to be one of the greatest stumbling-blocks to the layman in his appreciation of modern painting. He must nevertheless have some doubts of this traditional theory when confronted with the works of Manet or Whistler, and must come to realise that their subjects were often not beautiful in themselves; that an imitative reproduction of these subjects would have only resulted in something ugly and distasteful; but that the artists made use of them, seized their character, to interpret a truth. As a chemist takes one element and transforms it into another, so from their subjects they created something personal, something of truth and characterisation—a work of art.

Again, in the works of Velasquez we have a well-worn example of my proposition, but a good one inasmuch as these works are accepted by the whole world as masterpieces. Yet surely those wizened and misshapen dwarfs at

the court of Spain were not beautiful in themselves. They were distinctly ugly and revolting in nature, but the master-chemist in art transforms them, not by obliterating deformity and smoothing away the piteous and grotesque, but by changing them into a new element, and so creating a true and beautiful work of art.

That art must of necessity be beautiful is an axiom that has been held in all ages—and this undoubtedly rightly so. But beauty is a term, both subtle and vague. What stands for beauty to an artist is often not perceived as such by the man in the street, because his mental vision is incapable of realising it. The public not infrequently designates beauty as ugliness. Because a particular form of beauty is new and unexploited they are unable to understand it.

The works of the two painters I first mentioned are a case in point. Their pictures were jeered at and ridiculed from one end of the land to the other. There was a time when Whistler's pictures were hissed when put up for sale at Christie's. He became the laughing-stock of the crowd. The public exhibition of his pictures was regarded as an insult to British sanity and taste, and his work was lampooned by one of the finest writers and most mistaken of art critics that England has ever produced.

In like manner the paintings of Manet raised in France a storm of indignation and abuse.

At the present time these same works hold an acknowledged and foremost place in art, and are honoured in our public galleries—we flock in our thousands to admire what most of us not so long ago ridiculed. One cannot hope that this is a sign of universal enlightenment. It is simply that the public in these particular cases found their taste at fault, or rather the opinion of a few great minds forced them into an untenable position from which they discreetly retired, calmly confident of correct taste in the future.

Anybody, it is supposed, can realise what is beautiful and what is ugly; and in spite of their notorious experience to the contrary, people so continue to suppose.

Unfortunately, popular delusion (which is a synonym for popular opinion as far as the fine arts are concerned) must have a certain influence on the lay student in his appreciation of the plastic arts.

He must at the outset disabuse his mind of the assumption that the art of painting died a century or two ago, and can only be brought to life again with the help of the dry bones of the old masters. Art belongs to this age as much as to any other, and it is only the lack of simplicity and common sense that keeps it from its rightful place in any community. No art is vital that is not exclusively the expression of

its own time. The greatness of the Renaissance lay in its inventive and vital modernness. Greek art was great because, if I may use the term veneratedly, it was up to date.

The beauty and simplicity of life in ancient Greece doubtless tended to develop the art sense in the majority of the people, but we may reasonably suppose that there was a public even at the time of Phidias who complained that his work was immature and affected and unlike the work of some archaic master who had existed ages earlier.

We must all realise that the art of one age must, in the nature of things, affect to a certain degree the art which it precedes, in the same way that a man is affected by heredity ; but the conscious return to the art of the old masters, which of necessity precludes all spontaneity and invention, is, I believe, disastrous to modern painting.

I would not here leave the impression that I wish to convey any antipathy to the works of the old masters or that I do not regard many of their works with reverent appreciation. I only insist on the necessity of a vital modernity in all art. I insist that the painter, if he lay claim to being an artist, must be vital, spontaneous, an inventor of his own day, that he be modern, imbued with the spirit of his own time as Velasquez and all the great masters have been



Size of drawing $23 \times 17\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

DAPHNE.

From the water-colour drawing by J. S. Sargent, R.A.

modern in their times. I insist that his work must be a living force, not a dead language.

It is the painter's particular vision that makes his picture, not his paints or the manner in which he applies them. A painting is not necessarily great because it is a triumph of technique, because of its clever portrayal of the tactile surface of outer things, because of its quality of paint, but because it is an intense, individual expression of human emotion, and because its characterisation is fundamentally sincere. This alone can create a fine picture. We must get over the idea that what is known as "finish" is in any sense relevant to art. Ruskin insisted on finish and defined it as added truth, but truth cannot be an after-thought. It is existent or not existent from the beginning. No amount of high finish will improve a bad picture. This attempt to add on superfluous finish has created what is known in Paris as "le peintre pompier."

Technical skill, draughtsmanship, qualities of paint and colour and tone are component parts in a great picture, but they can only be brought together and materialised by that mental quality which enables the painter to become an artist. The result of his work is something concrete, visible, tangible, which can only be brought into existence through psychic force acting upon a peculiar mental susceptibility, not through manual

expertness. Colour and form are only the tools by which the artist works, the vehicles by which he transposes from the nature plane to the art plane. Naturally it may be asked—Has nature then no place in art ? Do you deny the necessity of nature in art ? That nature is art or that art is nature I deny emphatically, but it is equally obvious that apart from nature art does not exist. Nature is the background of all art.

The artist's latitude is limitless in nature which surrounds him. He is unfettered by all conventional traditions, he is unrestrained by any measurements of science, only must he seek his inspiration alone from his environment. If he fail in this he will of necessity miss all freshness, spontaneity, and personality.



Size of drawing 15 x 11 inches.

THE LONELY FARM.

From the water-colour drawing by Romilly Fedden, in the possession of W. Fothergill Robinson.

CHAPTER III

SOME LATTER-DAY INFLUENCES IN PAINTING

FALSE standards must always have some weight and influence on the lay mind, and when large masses of people have formed a certain opinion it must bias their judgment indefinitely.

It would seem that the opinion of the majority must be backed by a certain amount of common sense, yet if we consider the matter seriously we realise that common sense is the last thing on which a fashion is ever founded, and that ideas formulated at second hand can never be relied on.

To the philistine a cut-and-dried formula that he can readily grasp is naturally more acceptable than a mental conception. He can understand photographic imitation and the surface quality of paint, and especially the picture which tells a story. In the belief that these qualities are relevant and essential to fine painting, he carries along with him the unthinking majority of the public, the dealers who supply him with what he can understand, and even certain painters

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who, without believing in his definition of art, are dependent on his patronage.

If we admit the number of bad painters in this age to be enormous, we can conceive the proportionate number of bad pictures to be infinitely larger. The prescribed "pot-boiler" is often a greater necessity than we imagine. A warfare is everlastingly in progress between the majority who grasp only the superficial, and the minority who demand the essentials of art.

Artists from time to time at a low ebb in pictorial production, feeling the utter irrelevance and sterility of the work they see around them, strike out in a new direction, strive to get away from what has so aptly been called "the Olympian bluff of the academies" and back to vitality and truth. Such exodus is healthy, even apart from its claim as an important renaissance in art, insomuch as it tends to produce thought in place of stagnation.

It is only possible here to touch cursorily on one or two of the most important movements of our times. Among these we shall find that the Impressionist movement in France stands out as the most vital, because as a whole it was most spontaneous and inventive.

What was known as the Barbizon school included some of the greatest painters of the past century, but their individual methods and outlook were often at variance and they were

only united in an endeavour to find individual expression. In England the Pre-Raphaelites felt a need of change. They disbelieved in the formulas and second-hand theories of the painters around them; they realised that most of the work of their day was imitative and insincere, but they were afraid to put their own work in its place. They fell back on the art of the early Italians. Yet at times they painted great pictures; in spite of themselves and their theories, they became creative.

The Impressionists felt a like want in the art of their day. They knew its teachings were irrelevant, stagnant, and threadbare, but they themselves had something to say. Their expression was vitally modern, not a conscious return to the methods of the past.

Those were the days in France of what was then known as "le grand art," classical, historical, and religious painting derived from a conglomerate admixture of Ingres and David with the Italian Renaissance, but with none of the original charm of the art it aped. It had become a tradition implicitly followed by the studios and the popular painters of the time. It was dead and colourless. All light and atmosphere had gone from it. The chief aim of the Impressionists was to accentuate colour and to create light. They started by cleaning their palettes of the bitumen and other pig-

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ments which the Academic school were using in their formulas for monotone shadows and conventional lights; they insisted that no colour exists in nature by itself, that light alone can create colour; that colour being simply the irradiation of light, it follows that all colour is composed of the same elements as sunlight.

Therefore, alone with the seven tones of the spectrum, with the colours that go to make up light, they started out to paint light.

Writers on this school have confused the public by including in its ranks men who, though more or less influenced by, were not of the movement. The painter Degas is an appropriate example of this critical roping-in. Degas himself, though greatly influenced by the movement, always disclaimed his right to the title "Impressionist." Indeed their contemporary Cezanne, who has always been placed in the same category, was nearer to the Post-Impressionists and had aims and ideas totally opposed to those of the Monet group. Again, Courbet has been called an Impressionist. All art movements are to a certain extent influenced by those which precede them, and Courbet undoubtedly influenced the Impressionists, but he came before them and was actuated by other impulses and ideals.

It is always unsatisfactory to try to classify and group in art, and if we would be exact we

must subdivide by the number of individual personalities which every group contains. Claude Monet, however, may be said to be the founder of Impressionism, and in following his methods and ideas we shall most readily arrive at the prevailing tendencies of his school of thought. In brief, this movement was a revolt against the academic formula and convention of its time, aiming at a more truthful rendering of the thing seen, by a process of painting the thing seen only, and not what the painter might otherwise, that is, apart from his direct vision, know to be there.

The Impressionists aimed at a more logical study of the decomposition of colour. They advanced a new theory of complementaries, together with a method, far more scientifically developed than it had been previously, of obtaining atmosphere by means of broken colour.

This broken colour was the division of tones by juxtaposed touches of different colours which blend at a certain distance and produce upon the eye of the beholder the actual colour of the thing seen, but painted with a freshness and delicacy unobtainable by a single tone prepared and mixed upon the palette and giving vibration of light. The chief characteristic of the Impressionists was their intense love of nature ; they felt the need of nature's inspiration in all they did. They were typically open-air

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painters, men from all ranks of society, united by a deep desire for truth and characterisation in their work. Sincerity was the goal for which they struggled by untiring effort through appalling hardship and poverty, and the name their public gave them was "Les Fauves," the wild beasts.

The fury that this movement aroused is now a past and depressing history. To-day it is inconceivable to imagine the animosity and blind hatred that surrounded these men of the later part of the nineteenth century.

Not only were their works debarred from the Salon and every means devised by the academic school to prevent the Impressionists exhibiting elsewhere, but all Paris went out of its way to jeer and ridicule. Monet and his followers were lampooned and caricatured in the newspapers throughout the whole country. Art critics, connoisseurs, and academicians vied with each other in expressing their horror and contempt. It is difficult to find words strong enough to depict the attitude of the public with regard to these painters, whose work was as a red rag to a bull. In the exceptional and rare event of one of their pictures being admitted to a public gallery, an attendant had to be specially told off to stand near and protect the "atrocities" from the execrating mob which at once gathered around it. The public were aroused. The most

extraordinary fact in this most extraordinary history is not that the public disliked these pictures, but that their dislike took so active a form. On the face of it we might suppose that the love of art was paramount in their existence ; in reality, they cared nothing for it. But (and here we have the crux of their indignation) they had exact standards of what art was, of what artists might or might not do, and the Impressionists did not conform to these standards. The Impressionists at this time were unable to dispose of their pictures at any price, pictures which have since brought fortunes to those who then exchanged them, to use a colloquial expression which is here only too literally true, " for a piece of bread." Not only, we find, were the Impressionists unable to exhibit or sell their pictures, but they were literally persecuted during the years 1864 to 1890, persecuted by the Academy as the introducers of a new, harmful, and debased art, and by the public for being presumptuous mountebanks and poseurs and for producing pictures which were not liked or understood. It was, however, hardly logical to suppose that a group of mountebanks would continue to pose for nearly the space of thirty years, only to reap a harvest of derision and poverty. Failures they were from the monetary standard of the public and their dealers. One dealer stands out

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as a shining exception, for not only did he believe in them and exhibit their work, but he bought their pictures which he was unable to sell.

It may here be interesting to quote a review from the pen of a critic of high repute which appeared in the *Figaro* at this time :

“ The rue Peletier is unfortunate. Following upon the burning of the Opera House, a new disaster has fallen upon the quarter. There has just been opened at M. Durand Ruel’s an exhibition of what is said to be painting. The innocent passer-by enters, and a cruel spectacle meets his terrified gaze. Here five or six lunatics, of whom one is a woman,¹ have chosen to exhibit their works. There are people who burst out into laughter in front of the objects. Personally I am saddened by them. These so-called artists style themselves ‘Impressionists.’² They take paint, brushes, and canvases ; they throw a few colours on the canvas at random, and then they sign the lot. In the same way the inmates of a madhouse pick up the stones on the road and believe they have found diamonds.”

To those of our time who are not conversant with the pictures of the French Impressionists

¹ Berthe Morisot was the woman alluded to. Monet, Pissaro, and Sisley were also well represented in this exhibition.

² The name “ Impressionist ” had hitherto only been used in a deprecatory sense by detractors and the artists themselves had repudiated it ; from this time on they adopted it,

it must seem that technical monstrosities and æsthetic eccentricities could alone account for such a reception as was then accorded them ; yet to-day we find in them only the charm of simplicity and a love of nature which is almost childlike in its admiration and intensity. In England, unfortunately, at the present time we have very few examples of the best Impressionist work, and it is extraordinary that we have not acquired Monet's Thames series for this country. The Impressionists are, however, well represented in the Municipal Gallery of Dublin, by a collection which was the gift of Sir Hugh Lane, and in Paris and New York they hold an important position, both in private and public galleries.

Up to the time of the Impressionist school, people had been taught that only a mannered classicism, a conventional mysticism, were worthy of being classed as really fine art. They believed, as to-day some people still believe, that only what was exalted and grand in life could be grand and exalted in a picture. They expected a depiction of Mars and Venus, delineated in the manner of Ingres, coloured à la Tintoretto, and mannered by the bituminous monotone shadows and conventional lighting of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. They were confronted by a haystack or a cabbage-patch !

They were confronted by everything which

was considered commonplace and workaday in nature, and therefore unfit for the purposes of art. Even the peasants in these landscapes were the commonest kind of peasants, who appeared as boorish as their creators were imagined to be. It is true that the subjects chosen by the Impressionists were ordinary. They found motives in everything that came to their hand, in the everyday landscape around them, among common men, toiling ceaselessly in poor surroundings and on barren lands. These were not models tricked out in picturesque costumes, but real peasants, brutish, overworked and half-starved. Not for one moment would I suggest that their paintings were in any sense pictorial tracts on the debased condition of the peasantry! The Impressionists were only concerned with the one legitimate ideal of the painter—the desire for pictorial truth; and their generation, paradoxically, rejected their pictures, because they were without truth. These same pictures have since found their way into the foremost galleries of the world, have been fought for at auction by the most famous collectors of our time, and have realised prices hitherto undreamt-of in the annals of latter-day painting.

To the public mind these facts should be somewhat disconcerting, but the true importance of this movement lies in the influence it

has exercised over the whole civilised world. I am not insisting that the Impressionist school was impeccable. It must be admitted that while they brought air and light and truth into painting, they could not always keep science out. They were so occupied with propositions of light and colour that at times their work was lacking in form and composition. I do insist, however, that their work had a wider and stronger influence on painting than any art movement since the Renaissance. We find this influence running side by side with the individuality of Whistler, but in his pictures we see a sense of balance and repose which is often lacking in the works of the Impressionists. Accepted truth must always illuminate, and if the Impressionists were truth-bringers they must light the way and so influence all painters who come after them.

In more recent times the Post-Impressionist movement has stirred up antagonism and ridicule on all sides. This, it seems to me, is unnecessary and a sign of weakness in their antagonists. If the Post-Impressionists, as their calumniators assert, have no validity and artistic worth, their vogue will eventually cease. In the meantime they are having some fun. They are exciting some animation in the minds of those who go to see their work, whereas the academic production leaves the beholder as inanimate

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and dull as the work itself. My eyes were opened to this fact some little time ago. I had just spent an hour in a large exhibition of what in the slang of the studios is known as "old hat." There, as I wandered from one gallery to another, filled with gold-framed academic commonplace, finding little to interest me on the walls, I fell to examining the faces of the people round me. Here, too, was a like inanimation. The whole assembly wore an expression of settled, dull boredom. People read assiduously from their catalogues in toneless voices, but even the descriptive title failed to raise any lasting interest. A desire for tea and relaxation seemed to pervade the atmosphere. Then I went to see Post-Impression. Here was a new condition of things. Here everyone was alive. The Post-Impressionists were making the crowd think, stimulating them to vituperative animosity, to ecstatic admiration, to hysterical mirth. "Oh, my aunt, my blue Alsatian aunt!" ejaculated a man in the crowd. Such a remark would have fallen like a bomb in the Academic exhibition of the previous hour, but here it was hardly noticed. There was much to interest me in that exhibition, but for this the pictures were not alone responsible; some I was unable to understand, others seemed to me quite unconvincing, but a few filled me with admiration. Two small pictures stand out

vividly in my memory, two small French landscapes by Gauguin. Both were marvellous pieces of sincere characterisation, and yet they came in for a like share of blame from the antagonists and of praise from the followers of the movement. There seemed no discrimination in the crowd, who lauded or damned the pictures *en masse*. This reminiscence can therefore point no moral, save that the crowd, whether it liked, disliked, or simply followed a fashion, was not bored and inert in front of these pictures.

In attempting to state the tenets of Post-Impressionism I cannot do better than quote from Gauguin, its founder. "Always," he says, "paint from memory. Never see contrasts in colour, only harmonies. Only paint repose. Always use an outline. Never use details. Paint by instinct, not by theory. Never use broken colour." From these somewhat dictatorial directions, it will be seen that this movement was a reaction from, rather than a development of, Impressionism. Indeed, the followers of Gauguin have decried the emptiness and formlessness of Impressionist painting. They also have claimed a return to primitive form as opposed to the conventional form of the school of Ingres. In much of their work we find a desire for a primitive outlook, a naïve simplicity and, often, fine colour. I think the

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only charge that can fairly be brought against this school is that as a whole it is not modern or spontaneous. The assertion that it is new and inventive is not corroborated by the majority of its pictures. This movement is not of to-day, but in reality had its birth sometime B.C., when, doubtless, its true founders were truly simple, primitive, and naïve in their outlook. But this attempted return to a prehistoric age of painting seems to me as lacking in originality as were the methods of the academic school of 1870.

Affected naïveté is suicidal—a primitive outlook cannot be cultivated. We cannot be expected to count nowadays by cutting notches in a stick. In affecting a state whose essence is unconsciousness the painter must of necessity nullify that quality.

However, the Post-Impressionists have of late been subject to much adverse criticism, which besides being abusive has been quite unfounded, and the public have confused the true aims of the movement with those of its camp-followers and plagiarists. We may reasonably suppose that we are too close to this movement to be absolutely impartial, and whether we are in sympathy with its teachings or not we cannot afford to scoff at and belittle it, since it numbers such painters as Gauguin and Van Gogh among its principal exponents.

We must remember that what we understand as a "system" in art is never a preconceived plan, but is the result of a slow evolution, of which the author is often quite unconscious. He is only concerned with his own instinctive means of expression. This concern may bring into existence a new theory which in its turn is eventually formulated into a system. We stand before works which have in this way been evolved and say, "Thus and thus did the artist work—this was emphasised in his pictures and that was ignored." So we formulate a system.

In order to try to make clear the distinction between certain movements in painting, I have hitherto laid stress on the different systems they have evolved, but in arriving at Cubism this is no longer possible, because the Cubists have twisted the order of things. They have started with a result upon which they have built up a theory. We may trace the birth of Cubism to the unconscious authorship and misconstrued teachings of the painter Cezanne. This artist, seeking to express nature on his canvas, employed methods which were dictated by his individual feeling. He was conscious of the solidity, volume, and tangibility of everything around him. He insisted on planes, on depths, on thickness. This he expressed by a certain cylindrical construction. His work appealed strongly to a

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coterie of followers, who seized his methods and deliberately formulated them into a system without reference to nature, or to the real ideals and intentions of their originator. Since then Cubism has become involved with science. In thus changing, it may have relieved the spirit of Cezanne from all responsibility with regard to his surprising offspring, yet this cannot help us to its better understanding. For most of us Cubism is now a betwixt and between. It is influenced by science, but not of it. It originated from painting, but is not therefore necessarily art. It has interested some eminent foreign writers and critics, who although they may not be artists are certainly men of intellect. We may speculate endlessly (and probably uselessly) on this and other influences which have now arisen in the field of modern painting. Are they the outcome of a need to escape from tradition or simply the desire for notoriety? Can it be possible that Cubism contains the beginnings of something infinitely greater than itself? Or is it only the error of a group of painters who are trying to put mechanical recipes in the place of art, who are attempting to find a new formula for art instead of a new expression of beauty?

We have all read vague articles in the press which have not helped us, but have often hindered us in our understanding of these phases.

And here the majority of the art critics are wisely sitting on the fence—remembering their previous downfall with regard to Monet and Whistler ; but there are others who have eulogised these movements, indiscriminately and fulsomely, leaving the average reader bewildered. Even the “ Futurists,” to cite an extreme present-day example, are constantly being compared with the Post-Impressionists. Our illustrated daily papers have further fogged the public mind by constantly labelling bad reproductions of Post-Impressionist pictures as “ Futurist Art.” If ever two movements among painters were diametrically opposed, surely we have them here ! To those of us who believe that the art of painting must always be distinct from that of literature, the Futurist movement can only appear as something quite outside what we understand as pictorial art, for the Futurist is primarily an anecdotist. Of course I do not suggest that he is a *littérateur*, but only that his aim is to relate experiences on canvas, and because he is apparently doubtful as to the quickness of his public’s grasp, he prefaces his pictorial revelations with a lengthy explanation in the catalogue, and, not content with this, tacks on an abstrusely reasoned treatise of justification. The Futurists maintain that the spectator should be the centre of the picture, that they enable us to look out from and not upon their canvases.

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As example of a typical Futurist picture, we may assume its title as being "The Memory of Half-an-hour on a Balcony." In such a picture we shall observe a portion of the person who was on the balcony—probably the two eyes, or possibly the whole head of this individual, which, for the time being, the spectator must imagine to be himself. The balcony, or a portion of the balcony, is then placed upon the canvas, but quite apart from its relation to the position of the spectator. The weather experienced during this half-hour is suggested by the introduction of a patch of gold to represent the sun, or by perpendicular lines if the weather happened to be showery. The people walking in the street and observed during the half-hour by the spectator in the balcony, are of course all introduced, but they are not painted in actual size, but only as they affect the mind of that tiresome spectator. If a commonplace party hurried along the street he would be reproduced the size of a pigmy; on the other hand, if an important person sauntered down the street he would be depicted on a larger scale, but if he was run over by a motor-car he would appear enormous, and as for the motor-car, the canvas would have to be enlarged! The Futurists have officially claimed to be able to suggest not only vision but sound in their pictures. I cannot therefore be accused of

exaggeration in this example, for I purposely suppressed the toot of the motor-horn and the expiring groan of the important person.

My own excuse for touching here on the Futurists is to point out that their teachings can in no way be confused with those of the Post-Impressionists, who, whether we like their work or not, have gained a right to be regarded as serious painters. We may perhaps feel that these painters, in their aversion to mannerism and traditional orthodoxy, have possibly not realised that the fear of formulas, if exaggerated, may lead to other formulas and to a false ignorance which is as dangerous as a false knowledge.

In art we cannot acquire mental qualities, we can only be ourselves.

This is an age of analysis, which to the painter can be disastrous. He dabbles in the science of colour, he speculates in the temperamental forces which actuate other painters to fine work, he learns too much and is unable to be himself, to create unconsciously.

The pendulum, however, is for ever swinging. The error of one age in the arts inevitably moves on to its correction in another. If experience cannot offer us perfection, it can at least widen and enlarge our vision in the days to come.

CHAPTER IV

SOME VULGAR INSTINCTS

IN these days, when the prophets of "significant form" are illuminating our minds on the one hand, when our Royal Academy is maintaining a standard on the other, when we read in the *Times* that "only now have we become heirs of all the ages in the matter of art" and "that it is no wonder that we are a little bewildered by our sudden realisation of all the riches of our inheritance," when enlightenment on the subject of art is so universal,—any reference to vulgarity may seem invidious. Yet if the truth be told, can we step out of our doors without seeing art vulgarised? We see the word "art" to-day on all sides. It is written large by the manufacturer, stares at us behind the plate-glass windows of the wholesale emporium, and the "artist" in photography lives opposite across the street to the "artist" in modern jewellery; no wonder, as our leading newspaper says, no wonder that we are a little bewildered.

Wherever we go we are followed by vulgarity

masquerading as art, from the Royal Automobile Club to the Albert Memorial, through smug Kensington to the blatant picture-palaces, and on to sordid and pretentious Suburbia. Think of our crude and flaunting posters, which worry the eye on every hoarding—can these really be taken as a measure of our national taste? If we find stupid, vulgar ostentation in our streets, can we honestly congratulate ourselves on a better state of things within our houses? It is absurd to talk of a general advance in taste in the face of all that is meaningless and unessential in the average household. We may point out a few rare exceptions which only make the general rule more apparent, but if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that vulgar decoration is everywhere. We have doubtless now relegated the marbled and wood-grained wallpapers to the boarding-house, together with wax flowers and ornamented fire-screens. But are the embellishments of the new cult any less futile and affected? Our latest craze has been the Russian ballet, and a great artistic spectacle has given birth to "Bakst" bedrooms which are as ludicrous and out of place as "Futurist" bathrooms or "Cubist" salons. These are the vulgarities of cranks, but is the average wealthy Englishman's house blameless in this matter? There do we never find an indiscriminate conglomeration of

effects, crammed together without rhyme or reason? Costly knick-knacks which take the place of the woolwork mats and cheap ornaments of the boarding-house, gorgeously framed pictures crowded upon beflowered Morris wall-papers, rare old china plates (which were made to eat from) fixed high in meaningless patterns on the walls, a dozen periods of costly furniture crowded into one room along with unnecessary fancy-work and lace insertions, and all with what reason? The answer shines out from the things themselves: "We are placed here because our owner can afford us. We are utterly useless and meaningless in our present surroundings, but we imply wealth." (Of such are not those often crowded rooms, which win indulgence, where love has gone to the choice and placing of every cherished object.)

We all know rooms where a spirit of unrest is more or less felt, where bare spaces are regarded as anathema, where all objects of art are visually destroyed by their inappropriate and overcrowded surroundings, where wealth, instead of being a means to the dignity of life, is used simply to supply an unnecessary inventory of objects. For some of us a better state of things would be so easy. Those of us who have not reached the camel state—to be floored by the eye of a needle—could furnish sensibly on moderate means, instead of pretentiously and

vulgarly. It all comes down to a question of simplicity and lack of affectation. If the poseur in wealth kicks the beam in one direction, we may be sure that the dilettante in all that is precious and consciously æsthetic kicks as wide in another. I think we shall find that the lack of simplicity and common sense is at the root of all that is vulgar and ugly in life. That æstheticism which was a phase of Victorianism was vulgar because it was affected; what was known as "art furniture" was ugly simply because it was not designed on principles of common sense. A chair, for example, is something to sit upon, and when this chair is furnished with a high, narrow back, insecure balance, and inefficient seating accommodation, it becomes a poor chair and an equally poor work of art. To-day we find that the ugliest objects in our drawing-rooms are those which represent themselves to be something they are not, things covered with decoration irrelevant to their use. Thus, if a flower-bowl which is supposed to hold water for flowers is made to represent a basket, it becomes as absurd as a cake-dish whose rim is pierced with a lace pattern, because we know that basket-work is not water-tight and that lace is inappropriate to cake-crumbs. After all, demand alone creates supply. We find the greatest difficulty to-day in obtaining simple, plain household fittings, because everyone asks for

things in which general line is subservient to meaningless detail. Everything, from the door-knocker to the window-fastenings in the attic, is only obtainable when embossed with intricate and ornate design, and anything simple and plain has to be made to order. Paradoxically, tinkers, tailors, whatever our trade, we are now all art specialists, yet we must realise that art is the one thing we cannot specialise in. We cannot employ it in one branch of decoration if we are utterly oblivious to it in another. To be an artist is not only to be creative, but to be simple, direct, and childlike in outlook, and these are not the virtues we associate with modern trade and manufacture. Art is simply the disinterested and intuitive sense of the fitness of things. This sense can embrace everything, from the least to the greatest, from the tying-up of a bunch of violets to the organisation of a pageant. There are city children who have never seen flowers growing in green fields, who could show inborn grace in their arrangement, and who here could not only compete with the greatest ladies in the land, but would instinctively place the flowers in their right setting. The trouble with most of us is that we have grown mentally ornate, so are afraid of being direct and natural in the appointment of our houses. If simplicity could only take the place of fussy ostentation, we should find our living-

rooms more pleasant and restful than they are to-day.

There are, however, the rare exceptions of which I have spoken, and among these comes the memory of one room in particular, which perhaps, in parenthesis, is worthy of description. Imagine a broad frieze of warm cream outlined by the black of the picture-rail, and below this a wall of soft warm grey. The doors are black and a thick black carpet covers the floor. Now, this all sounds very colourless and funereal, but in reality the impression that this big room gives is one of comfort, cheerfulness, and perfect harmony. The whole appears quite unstudied and natural. The black carpet is hardly noticed, simply taking its place with the doors and picture-rail in carrying out the fine lines of the room and in framing and adding distinction to the general colour-scheme. This scheme is negative as a whole, but warm and delightfully restful, and forms a magnificent background for its few pictures, pieces of furniture, and richly coloured chintz. I remember especially a wonderful old Chinese vase standing against the grey wall filled with a mass of blue delphiniums which helped to strike the note of colour. Against this negative background not only things but people look at their best—dresses, stuffs, pictures, flowers, all are brought out and distinguished. In the light of many candles reflected from old

glass lustres this room seems to revive the grace of an age long past, to bring back the lost dignity of Life in a new and latter-day setting.

If a room is to hold beautiful things we may assume that its general colouring must be negative, or rather that such colouring is likely to result in harmony as a background for furniture and pictures. Now, this brings us to what I want most to say. Why have pictures at all—unless they are good pictures? Why this universal slavery to a convention? A certain number of nondescript paintings have become a precedent in our living-rooms, so we cling to what we imagine is established custom. It is only established because we cling to it. After all, pictures are not a necessity to any room, and in nine cases out of ten they add to its unpleasant aspect. There is a general idea, which is not confined to the bourgeois class alone, that each living-room should contain a certain number of pictures, preferably in massive gold frames of similar type and moulding. This assertion can be verified by the dealers, many of whom do a large trade in supplying these pictorial furnishings, assigning a certain number to a given wall-capacity and varying the class of goods to suit the different rooms they shall occupy. There is the dining-room class of picture, which is usually port-winey and heavy in colour, uniform in type and suggestive of food.

A luscious dish of peaches, the prize exhibits of the poultry-yard, or an appropriate reminiscence of the slaughter-house. The drawing-room picture is less ponderous in style, more ethereal in treatment, and suggestive of anything from an impossible Venetian canal to a more than improbable English landscape, and here the water-colourist has done his worst.

Now, there is really no need for these furnishings. There are many ways of decorating an interior, and the introduction of pictures is only one among the number. Many people do not like pictures. Then why should they be led by a fashion to plaster their walls with objects in which they take no interest? To those who are interested in painting, who feel the need of pictures in their homes, it should be apparent that over-crowding is to be avoided. There are in nearly every house certain pictures which are utterly worthless, which are not only bad pictures, but have never given a moment's pleasure to a single member of the household. These, obviously, had better be relegated to a lumber-room, or, better still, burned, not necessarily to make room for new pictures, but to create space and to remove a daily irritation.

Think of London alone, with all its pictorial failures in ashes! Imagine its millions returning tired to their homes with no "Soul's Awakening" to deter them from their evening meals.

Conceive their halls and passages freed from those preposterous St. Bernard dogs, those woolly sheep, those absurd and impossible ladies and gentlemen philandering round spinet or sundial. Think of them later in their drawing-rooms relieved of the flower-pieces which a distant relation stippled in her youth when taking her first lessons at South Kensington. If these works have any value in past association, by all means keep them ; but as likely as not their perpetrator was disliked or even unknown, or again they may have no connection with the family, but were simply a bargain lot at a sale. In the majority of cases we come down to a shilling sheet of Whatman paper which has been rendered valueless, some paint which was once worth a few shillings but is now worth nothing, plus a piece of glass and a picture-frame ; and for the price of these we sacrifice much more than their equivalent in harmonious surroundings and a sense of fitness.

Not only do we need to eliminate bad pictures, but we must realise that even a fine picture may be ruined by insufficient wall-space. For this reason we often find that pictures shown one at a time in a painter's studio impress us as being better pictures than when we see them later side by side in an over-crowded exhibition. The Japanese have realised this fact more thoroughly than we Europeans. The Japanese

collector does not fill his room indiscriminately with pictures, but hangs them up one at a time, and enjoys only one at a time. Like the Spanish don of old, he realises that the finest vintages do not bear admixture, but must be sipped with a fresh palate and unclouded judgment. When he has extracted the full flavour of one it will be time enough to contemplate the enjoyment of another. If the Eastern's fastidious taste leads him to one extreme, our western vulgarity leads us to the other.

We must get back to simplicity in daily life if we would get back to art. Only then can we realise that what we have hitherto imagined to be the intricate and somewhat useless toy of a few painters and sculptors is in reality the most simple and direct expression of life. We must give up specialism and recognise the universalism of art. We should realise that it should not only exist in our galleries and museums, but everywhere about us. The cabinet-maker must have it to make good cabinets no less than the painter to paint good pictures. And the purchaser must possess it too. We so often hear the conventional phrase : "Of course I am no artist, but I know what I like." But it is our business to be artists (unless we are lacking in all sense of fitness), not necessarily creators, but lovers of simplicity and common sense. Here

those who have acknowledged that they were not artists will rise up to expostulate, "What about that black carpet? What about modern painting?" Much of the modern work is the result of a fashion, and so is not art at all; but the best is essentially founded on these principles. It is only because we have taken only one kind of art for granted, and have become engrossed in academic classicism, that we find everything new and unexpected, disturbing, and ridiculous. It is because we have so long been specialists that we take objection to an original picture, or a plain black carpet. It is the same cut-and-dried outlook which has recognised gold as the only legitimate frame for a picture, and has looked askance at all other frames as being unorthodox and inappropriate. The regulation gold frame obviously makes for uniformity in an exhibition, but it should be equally obvious that gold frames are quite unsuitable to many pictures, and when an exhibition contains many galleries, there is no need to insist that they should all be devoted to one type of frame. As things now exist, we usually find the main galleries of an exhibition given over to gold-framed oil-paintings, others in which are grouped the gilt-edged water-colours, and even in certain cases (*vide* our Royal Academy) gold frames are insisted on for the drawings and prints in the black-and-white room. We cannot suppose

that Burlington House will ever see reason to change its methods, but I think a time will come when most of our galleries will realise that a good water-colour can hold its own side by side with a good oil-painting, provided that their frames harmonise with each other and with their background. Pictures will then naturally fall into their places along with the pictures which suit them best, and we shall find black frames in one room and gold frames in the next.¹

If we choose to hang pictures in our houses, we are bound by no fixed regulations and have only our own individuality and taste to consult ; yet we should find the logical link that exists between each picture, its frame and background. We should remember that spare spaces are always more valuable than cheap reproductions, and that several poor pictures are an extravagance giving us less enjoyment in selection and possession than one good sketch. These are the days of cheap reproductions, but we may question if even a good reproduction can in any degree take the place of original work. Our National Gallery, where we can see examples of the great masters, will also serve to show us how little of the original is found in the replica. In the modern reproduction there is always

¹ Since writing the above, the jury of the Salon d'Automne have unanimously voted that all pictures in colour and without reference to medium shall be hung together. So in Paris we shall soon see oils, water-colours, and pastels hung side by side.

something wanting ; we hang it up and like it for a day, tolerate it for a week, and then grow tired of it. It would seem that the printing press in giving us the picture has been heavy-handed and has killed the individual life-spark, to leave us only with a mummy. Now, in all good original work, be it a slight sketch or an important picture, this spark has not been crushed out, but is living, and for this reason we find our enjoyment grows rather than lessens with possession. It is only those so-called originals which have never possessed anything vital or spontaneous that pall and eventually become a disfigurement on our walls.

Now, if we really care enough for pictures to buy them and hang them up in our rooms, it is only reasonable that we should take some intelligent interest in painting, that we should compare the work of various artists in studios and exhibitions, in order to make up our minds as to what appeals to us most. Recourse to the middleman is obviously unsound, and here no slighting hint is conveyed except with regard to the perspicacity of the public. We know that the average painter is so poor a business man that the middleman has become his necessity, and this will continue so long as the buying public are ignorant and unintelligent with regard to art. Doubtless there are many dealers who look after the painter's interests as

well as their own. We must realise, however, that the dealer, though he may be an honest man, is not a philanthropist, and that he exists on the difference between the price at which the painter is able to sell and that at which the public buy, and this very properly so, if this difference is in any degree fair or equivalent. The ordinary commission on the sale of a picture is 25 per cent. : to this, though high, the painter cannot object. But when the middleman clears a cool 200 or 300 per cent. it becomes another matter. Constant examples are not wanting of such transactions in Paris and London, and here be it noted, the painter is forced to make a bad bargain, but the buyer is not under a like necessity. To all this the business man may reply, "But I can afford this. I am prepared to pay the dealer for an expert opinion." But is it an expert opinion? From his own standpoint does the business man show his commercial ability by paying so heavily for interested advice?

The dealer in the majority of cases is not an unbiassed expert, but a clever salesman who knows what will sell best, and how best to sell it. Moreover, he has his own stock-in-trade to dispose of, and is naturally not going to advise his client contrary to his own interests. Again, let us suppose he is commissioned to select a painter to do a portrait. The dealer can command a

certain figure, so it quite reasonably follows that his choice falls on the painter who will do the work at the lowest price, provided that such work will pass muster with the public, and so will not injure the dealer's clientèle. If the public show no discretion in their method of purchasing modern work, what word can describe their attitude with regard to the old? To-day many really bad pictures fetch colossal prices, not because they could possibly be desirable to anyone as works of art, but because they are ascribed to a famous and long-dead creator. Name and Fashion govern this market, and England has become the dumping-ground for all the faked old masters of Europe. America undoubtedly holds the palm for fictitious Corots, but the supposed Gainsboroughs and Sir Joshuas now in this country would, if placed side by side, stretch from John o' Groats to Land's End. We have, however, only to follow the public sale of old masters to realise the humbug, stupidity, and crass ignorance displayed by the majority of buyers in the auction-room. We were loud in the outcry raised at the price the nation was forced to pay for Holbein's masterpiece, yet we gamble in François Bouchers and more than doubtful Raphaels.

In the past a few people bought old pictures because they liked them. Rush followed, creating a fashion, driving these works, many of

which are utterly worthless, to a fancy figure and proportionately depressing the monetary value of modern painting. To-day not only the artist but the craftsman is elbowed from his legitimate place in society and is given no encouragement from a short-sighted and unimaginative Government or from the big profiteering class. We are all so busy making things hurriedly, cheaply, mechanically, and badly, that we have no time to encourage real craftsmanship in our factories and workshops. We find it pays best to supply cheap luxuries to the greatest number, so we think we can afford to leave necessary instruction to the leisured class who twice a week find time to put on brown-holland aprons and play at "arts and crafts"—at the local art-school. To-day our recognised art instruction is a disgrace to the country. Its stereotyped methods are calculated to crush all spontaneity and individual feeling. We dictate with a plumb-line and measure by rule and force each student into the same mould. To the artless politician it may be of no immediate consequence that art is being ignored. When we spend millions on the science of destruction for the protection of our country we might reasonably give a little thought—even money—to the encouragement of its constructive arts. This alone can give us great pictures, statuary, and architecture

which not only create a great tradition, but add prestige to a nation's glory. We do nothing, and yet we are apt to complain that present-day art is at a low ebb. This is not the fault of the artist, but of the general public. When a community makes gain its chief aim and allows fashion to usurp the place of common sense, its art always becomes mercenary, illogical, and therefore bad. Let us make no mistake ; art is a much more simple thing than most of us imagine. It is no abstruse cult for the specialist, but a simple, direct, and logical outlook, infinitely broadening our horizon and giving zest to our existence. Moreover, bad taste is a misnomer. There is really only taste and its fictitious substitute. When we insist on what is useful, sensible, and conducive to a rational existence, we not only gain inestimable advantages for ourselves, but forward the art standard of our generation. It is only those people whom the French call "bête" who are too foolish to know what they really want, who are too weak to use their own judgment, who are too stupid to have a reason for the things in their houses and the things they put on their backs ; it is only these plagiarists in life who foster ugliness and kill art. We may imagine that if a contemporary Michael Angelo was born to-day he would help his generation to a better state, but we should only find that he would create some

great pictures and sculpture, influence a small circle, and probably die unrecognised by the public of his time. No, the taste of a nation does not rest in the hands of its artists, but in the common sense of its people. When the nation desires simplicity it will obtain it; when it demands simple decoration, sensible furniture, logical architecture, it will create the supply. Then will a great art epoch have unconsciously begun in England and artists will arise worthy of her renaissance. Then will the dealers of faked old masters and imitation furniture automatically drop out of the ranks, together with the jerry-builder and the manufacturer of the cheap and meretricious. In the meantime we must walk warily with regard to our own taste and susceptibility, remembering that we are all more or less inoculated with the poison of fashion and conventionality, and are therefore apt to look askance at anything which is new and unexploited. We must think for ourselves before coming to any conclusion, and our only true criterion is common sense,

CHAPTER V

ON DRAWING AND COMPOSITION ¹

ANYBODY of average intelligence can learn to draw. It is simply a question of clear-headed practice.

A fine draughtsman is a rare genius, but most of us can learn to become sound draughtsmen if only we will take the trouble.

Given the intelligence, the taking of trouble is the foundation of all sound production in drawing and painting.

Drawing is the expression of form by means of lines or values. If you don't feel form in line, you can express it in tone—in values.

After all, the use of line in the expression of form is more or less a convention—we do not see

¹ This chapter is composed from notes taken verbatim during various demonstration lessons, which are here printed more or less in the order in which they were originally set down.

the shape of things in nature by means of actual lines, but by means of tones and planes.

Do it in the way you think it should be done, only keep thinking. Why don't you think more and draw less?

That drawing there took you one hour of manual labour, and it would have been a better drawing if you had used your charcoal for only forty minutes and had spent the rest of the time in making up your mind what you could simplify or leave out. Sit down and think about your drawing, which is limited and of fixed dimensions. There is no frame round nature! —but you have to place your drawing within a given space. Remember that the lines which confine this given space must of necessity influence and be influenced by every line of your drawing.

See what you can leave out, not what you can squeeze in. Centralise your motif. Make up your mind what constitutes your point of interest. Don't rely for help on a plumb-line or any other mechanical contrivance. Exact measurement will never help you to draw. Don't draw in hard and heavy lines till you have explored your theme on the paper. If you are not sure where everything will come, start as it were prospecting,

feeling the way with your charcoal, skating across your paper with endless cobwebby lines, seeing where one line will cut another, how one point stands with relation to another. When you have once arranged your composition, you can then insist on your principal line and put it down pat! There is always a fundamental line in every composition, one which binds the whole thing together. The critics once named it the "synthetic line," but now they use this word in so many senses that no one who is not a critic can possibly understand them. However, what I mean by the synthetic line is the line that counts, the principal line of construction in a drawing.

Go for the big forms, the big lines, first. Go for the things that count. Don't, as it were, start off by drawing round the high lights on the forget-me-not blossoms in the middle distance. And, above all, don't put in things you can't see because you know they are there, because you are confident you could see them if you had not left your glasses at home.

Blessed amongst draughtsmen are the short-sighted, who are not tempted to see the things which do not count.

Don't spend too much time with your char-

coal glued to your drawing-paper ; put it aside now and again. Say to yourself, " Am I just letting my hand copy mechanically, or am I honestly trying to give the personal expression of what I see in front of me ? " If you can think between whiles it will help you most. Simultaneous brain and hand work may result in executive " wobble." So when you do take up your charcoal, don't be afraid of it, draw firmly and with conviction ; draw with your arm and not with your finger-tips. Convince yourself of the general form of an object and then put it down without hesitation. Try to find the big swinging lines, not the small intricate ones. The constructive lines are the ones that count.

Never give up drawing from nature, and never give up drawing from memory too. The value of memory drawing lies in the fact that so much is forgotten. If you have in the first instance observed nature intelligently, you can go away and make a memory drawing in which you retain the things of importance, the big facts of your composition, and lose the irritating details.

Don't be everlastingly " finishing up." No amount of elaboration can change a mechanical piece of craftsmanship into a fine drawing. If your start is unspontaneous and meaningless, you

will never improve it by adding detail, and will save lots of time by tearing it up and starting again.

Whistler's paradox "A work of art is finished from the beginning" is not an affectation, as some people would have us believe, but sound common sense. Try to simplify, not to elaborate; and remember that literal exactitude in drawing is not truth.

You ask if this particular drawing is in proportion! I don't think it is, but it is a very nice drawing all the same.

Most of you seem to think that proportion is the end and aim of good draughtsmanship. As a matter of fact it is only the first step in the perception of form, and I would go so far as to say that precise geometrical proportion does not exist in the finest drawings. We must draw, not reality, but the impression of reality. We are all out, I take it, to put down what we see as we each, individually, see it, not to measure up and compare with a footrule.

Suppose you all go out and do a moonlight to-night, you will see the moon coming up over these marshes looking bigger than anything else in the landscape. Now, suppose, for my argument's sake, you all start working on pieces of

paper of an equal size and from the same point of view. Some of you will make the moon as large as a florin, others the size of a five-shilling piece, whereas actually in relation to the proportions of the landscape in front of you the moon is really less than the size of a threepenny bit. If you don't believe me, you only have to take up photography to prove it, and then you can manufacture endless moons of exact and correct proportion. But I shall stick to drawing, and my moons will be better than yours—my moons will be characteristically truer to nature as we see her, not only because your camera sees only through one eye while the majority of humanity sees through two, but because it is empty-headed and has only an automatic lens in place of an individual intelligence.

Look less at your paper and more at what you are trying to draw. I had almost said, don't look at your paper at all! For there are times when you will gain sympathy of line by looking hard at the object you are drawing, and, as it were, feeling your way on the paper, as you watch carefully the rise and fall, the fluctuations and gradations in the line of the actual object in front of you.

Try to draw with a sympathetic line—not with an unyielding, tinlike edge. Don't outline.

Don't put in lines you can't see. Try to emphasise on your paper where a line is lost and found in nature. You can only express all you have to say by a nervous and fluctuating quality of line.

The composition of this drawing is all wrong. It has no balance. The weight is all down in the left-hand corner and drags the eye away from what should be your point of interest. The result is an unhappy-looking drawing! You must think more about placing your drawings. Fine composition is the individual and inventive distribution and balance of lines or tones which result in harmony.

I take a piece of charcoal and make a dot upon a sheet of paper—thus. This dot now exists as the sole punctuation on this white sheet of paper. At some distance I then make a second dot, and in so doing create direction. I have drawn no line between my first dot and my second, yet the eye at once passes from the one to the other.

Again, in placing a third dot upon the paper I increase the direction and movement, the eye follows the angles made by any number of points I choose to insert. If these points fill my paper with balance and symmetry, the result is, in the most primitive sense, a good composition.

It must follow that certain forms are pictorially more symmetric and happy than others.

You must also grasp the fact that the position of an object on your canvas determines the movement of your picture, and in readjusting the object you may retard or accelerate the movement. For example, draw a right-angled triangle on your canvas, its base on or parallel to the base of your canvas ; the result is placidity, solidity, and perfect balance. Next, move the position of your triangle. Tilt up one corner—what is the result now ? You have lost balance and solidity, and at the same time you have increased movement on your canvas.

The triangle in endless variation, the circle, and the letter S have been consciously or unconsciously used by painters in all times, as the basis of form construction, the two latter, perhaps, because their forms are in-running, not out-running.

I believe that lines which run in are always more symmetrical than those which run out of a picture, hence the avoidance of lines which make for the corners of a picture.

At the same time we shall find that a good composition never imprisons our vision, but that our eye can always find an easy ingress and also a way out of the picture,

If you take a vertical line down through the centre of your picture, I believe this line to be unfortunate pictorially, also any point of interest would be more harmonious when placed to the right or the left of this line, and any important direction in your composition would be happy in not following but in cutting through this line. The same facts, I believe, hold good for a line drawn horizontally across the middle of a picture.

In other words, don't cut your picture into spaces of equal size and proportion. For some psychological reason for which I can give you no scientific explanation, the mind always reflects as inharmonious the equal division of space in a picture—the eye becomes migratory and uncertain and wanders restlessly from one equal space to another. Such spacing must always destroy the poise and centralisation which are essential to a fine drawing.

Remember that any feelings I express with regard to composition must be purely personal and are my rules for myself. If you find I lay down rules for your compositions, remember that they are made to be broken ninety-nine times out of every hundred. They can only at the best be suggestions to be left or to be taken, if they happen to coincide with your feeling of composition which must essentially be your

feeling, not mine. You can only place, alter, and adjust for yourselves.

I believe there are no fixed rules in this game, save one, which is—never try to say two things on one canvas. If you disregard this rule, you will always fall between two stools. You must concentrate and you must centralise, and if your motive is not worth a piece of paper all to itself it is not a composition that is worth doing.

You seem to have worried over that drawing. You don't seem to have enjoyed doing it. You say it has lots of mistakes, which is quite true, but it is only by making mistakes that we learn to avoid them. "The man who never makes mistakes never makes anything." We are all bound to spoil lots of good paper, so for heaven's sake let us spoil it cheerfully, and learn something.

This metaphorical sandpapering, finishing-up, and gold-framing as a gift to grandmamma is fatal to good work. If you sat nearer the wastepaper-basket and did not worry you would do much better work and the few drawings you did not tear up would be worth something—though, of course, not to grandmamma!

Take care of your darks and your lights will take care of themselves.

Follow form more in your shadows and find where the edges of your shadows are lost and where they are found.

Find your highest light and your darkest dark. In every *motif* there is one light lighter than anything else and one dark darker than anything else.

Now, in drawing this head you have started by drawing its outline—into this fixed outline you are trying to fit the features. It seems to me in so doing you put the cart before the horse. Surely it is more simple to work from a centre, to start with the features and then surround them, rather than to begin with a definite outline into which you have to squeeze like a jigsaw puzzle the various parts. Now, what interested you most in this head? The eyes. Well, would it not have been more simple to have begun with the eyes, to have determined their positions, from there to have worked outwards to the planes of forehead and nose, on to the direction and position of the mouth with relation to the nose and forehead and eyes, and so, right away to your surroundings and background? But it is all a matter of individuality. If you feel you must begin with an outline, by all means start that way. Work any mortal way you like, so long as your way is the out-

come of your personal conviction and not the result of glancing over the shoulder of the person next to you.

Yes, everything helps that makes you think. Read any number of books on anatomy so long as you forget it all afterwards. You have to draw things as they look, not as they are.

Give up these line recipes. We are all cursed by being clever enough to see how other people do things, instead of doing them in our own way. You don't see nature in cross-hatched and horizontal lines! Keep your surfaces simple. Put dark where you see dark and light where you see light, and do it simply as nature does it. Your background looks like nothing on earth. It should be a flat tone behind the head and not a dynamite explosion.

You must get away from the idea that elaboration has anything to do with fine drawing. Surface work and stipple lead only to neat handicraft, to the kind of pretty triviality that appeals so much to most people. If you are going to learn to draw, you must give up embroidery work. Above all, you must draw from your own instincts, and not to suit other people's.

Don't make so much of reflected lights. With your eyes half closed these cast lights become

invisible, or infinitely lower in tone than you make them.

This drawing here is good in many ways. I cannot put my finger on any one point and say, "This is out of drawing." The surface proportion seems to me right, and yet the whole figure is as flat as a pancake. You have drawn down the figure, but you have not drawn through the figure. Your drawing has no planes, no thickness. You have not felt the roundness and solidity of your model. These qualities are essential to fine drawing. This arm of the model is not thin like a postage stamp; it is solid—thick—cylindrical.

This insistence on the cylindric quality was the origin of Cubism, before the Cubists began to go mad.

Don't look only at the shape of the model, but look at the shape of the background as well. Go for the "left spaces"!

Perhaps I can make my meaning clearer if we imagine you are drawing a map of the south coast of England and the north coast of France. If you look only at the coast-lines you are bound to go wrong, and you will probably run Calais right into Dover; but if you look at the shape of the Channel between, all is plain sailing. In that case the English Channel would

be your "left space." Same way in drawing a kitchen chair—if you fix your eye on the wood-work alone it is a terrible business ; but if, as well, you notice the "left spaces" between the rungs and legs and back and compare their shapes and proportions, then it becomes a simple matter.

Anyone who thinks can draw a chair.

A tone drawing is like a musical scale. You may play your scale in the bass or in the treble, that is, you may start with black and relatively work up to half-tone, or again you may begin with your half-tone and work to white paper. The key you work in does not matter so long as your values are relatively harmonious. It is the jarring false note in the scale that kills the harmony.

Never guess at or try to "fake" your values. If you only have ten minutes in which to make a sketch, you can make notes and memorise, but you must be sure of your values.

If you are pressed for time, write down 1 against your highest light. No. 2 will be your next value, and so on, down to the darkest tone in your picture. In this way, if you really have compared your values carefully one with another, you will in five minutes have made a more valuable document for future use than you

could have obtained in an hour by working out the actual tones in your sketch-book.

Make drawings out of doors which, however incoherent they may appear to your friends, will be of some real service to you in the studio.

Look at other people's drawings whenever you get the chance. Examine the drawings of D. Y. Cameron and George Clausen—see what they are trying to say, not how they are trying to say it. Forget their methods. Remember they aren't your methods.

You are all trying to draw like somebody else. If you would only give up trying to draw like Orpen or John or Sargent or even Albert Dürer, you might do something really good.

Imitation is the bane of the age; even children suffer from it nowadays.

I saw a case in point a few days ago. A child was drawing a head in profile. She could only see one eye as her nurse sat by the window sewing. So she drew in one eye—a three-cornered, conventional thing, as remembered from her picture-book. Then came the further remembrance that all the faces in that special picture-book had two eyes (it happened to belong to the full-faced Gollywog order). There was great perturbation over that eye—eventually the child solved the difficulty by isolating



Size of drawing $15\frac{1}{4} \times 9\frac{1}{4}$ inches.

THE VALLEY.

From a drawing by D. Y. Cameron, A.R.A., in the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

number two in mid-air, placing this second eye well in front of, and outside, the profile of the nose. We are all naturally influenced by what we have seen before and apt to put in what we know to be there, rather than what we see. It would be an interesting experiment to keep a child who had an instinct for drawing away from photographs, drawing-masters, and any form of modern illustration, and let him discover form for himself. Stupid people will say, "Dull for the child." Not a bit of it, granted the drawing instinct. The child could not be dull, because it is the inventors that get the fun out of life, not the imitators.

You are terribly worried by knowing too much. You know what things are before you start drawing them. Therefore you draw what you know to be there, rather than what you see. When you are making a sketch of a group of figures, forget they are a definite number of people, with a given number of noses, heads, and legs. Imagine them as a group of pumpkins! Imagine them as a group of anything, rather than human beings, if, by so doing, you can make an impression only of what you see and as you personally see it.

Work with your eyes half closed and find only the big masses. If you glare at nature with your eyes wide open you won't get a

better vision, but you will be bothered as to the number of blades of grass in your foreground. Keep cheering up. Work away, and don't let people worry you. The criticism of your candid friends who have never tried to draw is rarely of the slightest value. They have a solid conviction at the back of their minds that theirs is the sound common sense and true outlook, and that the painter's vision is always more or less clouded by—well, by being a painter. These people do really think they know. They do really think they look at things. As a matter of fact, they came into the world and were informed that trees were green and the sky was blue and they have seen no reason to modify this assertion. For untold centuries men have made use of eyesight, and yet are still for the most part unconscious of how very limited is the actual radius of human vision. They imagine they see so much more than the artist. Many people regard photography as a means to the most truthful representation of what they actually see, whereas the camera creates an absolutely false impression, both of form and motion. Our sight is only capable of noting arrested movement, and the brain declines to accept as a symbol of motion anything to which the human eye is unaccustomed. A photograph of a rough sea looks like a sheet of crumpled tin, and that of racing horses is not only

without motion but filled with forms which no human being could possibly see in life. The constant use of photography has dulled our perception of these facts and in time we may even grow camera-sighted, although we shall never be able to see details as minutely or as indiscriminately. Because we have a predilection for the camera's view of nature in preference to our own, it is unreasonable to suppose that certain pictures are untrue or lacking in finish, simply because they are visual impressions and not mechanical and false elaboration of facts. We are apt to designate as "impudence" the very quality in a picture which makes for centralisation and truthful focus.

A man stands in front of a picture representing, let us say, a crowd at a circus.

"Just look at that blurred smudge," he remarks, "which this painter fellow asks me to accept as a crowd of human beings. Why, if I had been at that circus, I could have distinguished all the faces of the spectators at twenty paces, and at ten paces I could have told you how many buttons were on the nearest man's waistcoat, and so could anyone whose eyesight is normal."

As a matter of fact, if he had made the experiment at the distance of ten paces and fixed his gaze on the man in the front row, he would have realised how limited was the actual radius

of his vision. Not only would he not have been able, without changing his centre of vision, to count the number of buttons on the waistcoat, but only a very few of the surrounding faces would have been distinguishable as faces. The rest would have been a blur. This impression of centralisation is the business of the painter. This is only an obvious example. It is, however, astounding that all of us, to a certain extent, rely on accustomed and preconceived idea instead of observing instinctively and drawing only what we see.

Let me repeat, draw only what you see and in the way you personally see it, work simply, work direct, never try to be clever, only try to be true.

Keep drawing, and don't be discouraged. Remember that more than half the fun of the game lies in its endless difficulty, that a facile drawing is not often a good drawing. Much of the charm of the best drawings of the world is because they were not made easily, but were come at through endless worry, elimination, and, above all, a desire for individual truth.



Size of drawing $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12$ inches.

A ROOF OF A BARN.

From the charcoal drawing by George Clausen, R.A.

CHAPTER VI

COLOUR

It would seem on the face of things that we had a more solid and comfortable foundation in the facts and actualities of life than in the mists of unreality. Yet we find that fact can be stranger and more elusive than a dream. We cannot fix the moment when reality separates itself from unreality. The mystery of matter is for ever beyond our grasp. In this existence, where all is really shifting and visionary, the mind often refuses to be satisfied with what we are taught to believe is concrete fact, and blindly feels that semblance, rather than substance, embodies the larger truth.

In studying colour we find ourselves in a region so ethereal and shifting that even its definition baffles us. We realise that we cannot explain what we understand in painting as good colour. We may fairly claim to know what are the essentials of a fine drawing, but not so with colour. We may fumble with the word harmony, but this does not begin to define fine

colour, and we can only speculate on its uncharted boundaries.

In the realms of fact, however, the solid ground is quite removed from under our feet, for here we find that colour, as colour, is non-existent, and what in nature has been called colour is really an illusion. When as children we were called from the garden through the summer twilight to our beds, we liked, as we snuggled down, to imagine the red roses whispering to the yellow honeysuckle outside in the warm darkness.

We may still keep our illusion about those whisperings, but if that garden were quite dark, we are forced to give up the colour of our flowers. In reality they were only putty-coloured images when there was no twilight left in the sky. Now, we find that the only force which can supply colour to the objects around us is light—the sunlight which envelops all things, and reveals them with infinite change, in accordance with varying hour and intensity of light.

So if colour has no actual existence, it must logically follow that the landscape we see beyond our studio window is in reality monochrome. Those greens and blues and pearly greys are non-existent. There are no colours on the hillside and no yellow primroses in the near orchard. In fact we find that each monotone object simply reflects rays of light which vibrate at a given

rate of speed, and these rays, striking the retina of the eye, produce the impressions which we call colour. At the back of the eye is the retina overlaid by the optic nerve, containing millions of minute filaments which receive and convert for us the vibrations of light into colour.

These impressions are infinitely varied—no two people have exactly the same range of colour-vision. No two pairs of eyes contain a like number of filaments, which for convenience' sake we may call colour-receivers. If our eyes happen to be rich in these receivers, our colour-sense will be proportionately powerful; but as they decrease in number so do we approach nearer to what is known as colour-blindness.

As a matter of fact, all of us are partially colour-blind to the full colour-scale which light creates. Only one-quarter or less than one-quarter of this scale is covered by the colours we see in the rainbow, and the prism of the rainbow includes all the colours visible to our eyes.

Here our vision is confronted by a double-locked door. At the point where the human eye ceases to record colour-impressions there begins a series of vibrations which we can only feel as warmth, and still lower down the scale is another series which the human ear records as sound; yet we know that these vibrations also exist as colour-waves; that each note of music has its own individual colour-note, which though

existent is imperceptible to the human eye. We may only conjecture the infinite possibilities beyond that fast-closed door, should future generations find the key that would unlock it.

In our examination of colour we realise that not only is nothing in nature actually the colour we see it, but that the very tint of the pigment used by the painter has no definite and fixed existence once it is out of the tube. It is varied and changed by the light-vibrations which emanate from its surroundings; at a given moment it appears to us as a given colour, but this is only in relation to the apparent colours which surround and affect it from all sides.

In painting, however, we have to study not facts, but appearances. Scientific investigation can teach the painter very little, but it should point out to him the futility of trying to acquire the sense of colour. We are each born with a definite range of colour-perception, and no amount of endeavour can in any way increase this range. The colourist is the last person in the world to try to search out colour, because he finds it with him and in him everywhere.

We may possibly make ourselves more conversant with the range of colour at our disposal, and so improve our perception of harmony, but the important consideration for the painter is the search for warm and cold colour in nature.

This point has never been sufficiently insisted on to the student, who, even with a very limited sense of colour, may, by a sure definition of the warmth and coldness in his tones, arrive at a great charm of colour-harmony in his work.

Let us suppose that he is painting a village street in sunlight. All the lights of his subject will then be warm in relation to the cold colours in his shadows. That is, the lights will be found to contain reds and yellows, rather than the blues and greys of the shadows. Now let us suppose that a cloud covers the sun and let us look at the village street under a grey sky. Every colour of the subject has now absolutely changed. The lights are no longer warm, but cold, and we find that the darks have all become relatively warmer than in sunlight. During the time of sunlight we noticed that an open doorway formed a cool, dark mass against the warm tone of the surrounding whitewash ; now, with the loss of sunlight, the whitewash has become cold, more blue in colour, and the dark of the doorway is no longer cold but hot. Further, let us suppose that well inside this doorway hangs a red curtain. It exists for our eyes as a strong, warm red, within the dark mass which surrounds it. Then out comes the sun again, and we see that the curtain is less red, less bright and positive in colour than in the subdued light of the previous minute. It is contained by the

doorway's shadow, which becomes cold as the lights in our street become warm again.

We may broadly assume that if our lights are warm, our shadows must be cold, and *vice versa*, but this rule is infinitely modified by colour-refraction.

As I have already pointed out, colour is unstable in its essence, and is for ever affecting and affected by everything around it. Thus the shadow on the whitewashed wall may be blue as a whole, and in relation to the warmth of the portion of the wall that is in sunlight, but into this shadow surrounding colours project themselves. In fact, the whole street becomes a series of mirrors for their reflections. The colour of the road will act on the wall above it, and in like manner a yellow-washed house across the way would reflect its colour on our white-washed wall opposite.

In every object around us, no matter how dull its surface may be, we find a continual interplay of colour. A blue vase placed upon a yellow tablecloth will not only bring about a subtle but exact interchange between the blue and the yellow, but will create a new colour-element in their reflections which is complementary to the two principal colours.

We eventually come back to the fact that colour does not exist of itself, that locally and apart from its surroundings colour is an illusion,

and that in painting we can never fix the colour of an object apart from its surroundings. Thus, we go out to look at the pearly grey-green of an evening sky and then come back to the lamp-lit room again. Here we can still see the sky through the long windows, but it has totally changed. It now appears to us as an intense blue, although a moment ago, outside on the terrace, there was not a trace of blue in the sky. This change is brought about by the rays of light from the lamp which reveal to us the warm colourings of the lighted room. These call up their complementary colours, so if the prevailing colour in the lighted room be orange, it will immediately suggest its complement blue, and our eyes will register a blue sky in place of the pearl-grey one of a moment ago.

From this we may judge of the impossibility of attempting to paint in moonlight with the aid of an artificial light. Any pocket-lamp or light of any kind close to the painter's eyes must change and destroy his whole colour-scheme, and he will obtain much truer results if he gropes in the dark or makes notes to help his memory.

Again, he will only increase his difficulty in painting at night if he tries to study the same subject by day. Much of the details he then sees is totally lost at night, but if he has mentally noted these details in broad daylight, he will be apt to unconsciously insist on them in his

painting, not because he can see them, but because he knows them to be there. The appearance of objects is never the same by day as by night, and it is the appearance of things which should be the only concern of the painter. The velvet-like shadow of moonlight will envelop one building so that it seems lost and far away, whereas another in full light looms up white and gigantic. Then, it is of no help to the painter to remember that by day these two houses are actually the same size. We must all realise that not only colour but form is visually changed and altered by every change and difference of light and atmosphere. Not only is colour for ever varying and changing, but we cannot limit its range or determine the excellence of one of its combinations with regard to another.

Suppose six of the greatest colourists of all time could be brought together to paint the same subject at the same hour and under the same effect of light. We should find the half-dozen pictures which they then painted each complete and satisfying in its own way, and the chances are we could not select one as being more true and perfect than the rest—yet there would be no resemblance between them. No two colour-schemes would be alike. The vision of each painter would be absolutely different. One pair of eyes would be susceptible to the blues and greys, another to the violets and greens

of nature, and so on ; but in each case the result in its own way would be right, perfect, and complete.

To express colour and light in a picture is of great importance. The difficulty is to express both. The range of the painter's colours are quite inadequate in value to the range he sees in nature around him. He is therefore forced to temporise with the pigments at his command and to substitute relative tones which most nearly correspond to those of nature.

Now let us imagine he is painting a landscape which is made up of a cloudy sky, some water, trees, and marshland. This sky is grey and not as high in value as white paint. The water is lower in tone than the sky. Again, the trees and marshlands are dark, but not nearly as dark as black, which is the lowest tone on the palette. Here all is plain sailing. The painter is able to cover all the tones he finds in nature with the tones of his palette.

Now let us bring a new value into the landscape in the form of direct light from the sun. Hitherto the light has been subdued, but now there is a break in the clouds and an aisle of light across the water. Not only is this light a thousand times too bright to be reproduced by white paint, but it is luminous with colour. This colour further increases the painter's difficulty, as in adding colour to his white paint he must

of necessity make it less white. He must lower its tone and so remove it even further from the brilliant tone of nature. The question now arrives as to which is pictorially the more important factor in this high light, its colour or its brilliance. Individual temperament can only determine this question. The painter's conception of the landscape now becomes a kind of symphony, starting from a single theme, which is worked out with relative variations all over the canvas. He opens with this high light (insisting on its brilliance at the expense of its colour or making its brilliance subservient to its colour), and proceeds from this his highest tone to regulate all other tones to its relation. But because his highest notes are infinitely lower than those of nature, he is forced, as it were, into a lower key. The scale that nature plays in the major, he can only reproduce in a minor.

In returning to the question of colour versus light, we must realise that only from the point of view of the painter can they be regarded as separate and diverse. In nature's scale the two are part and parcel of each other and are inseparable one from the other. This scale is, however, beyond the painter's reach, he is therefore forced to transpose—to do the best he can with an imperfect medium. Many of the early landscape-painters got round this difficulty by forcing down the tone of their

foregrounds, or by darkening some near object, such as a house or a tree, which was deliberately made out of tone and colour with the rest of the picture, to enable the eye to find both colour and brilliancy in the sky and distances beyond.

The great thing in making a picture is to make up our mind. We can't have everything. We must sacrifice something. We must make up our mind as to the proper relation of parts to the whole, as to which colour predominates, and so gives a key to the rest. The general colour-scheme is infinitely more important, pictorially, than local colour. The value of the latter consists only in its complementary quality ; to accentuate and act as a foil to the general colour-tendency of the whole.

As I have already pointed out, nature's general colour-scheme is divided into warm and cold colours. We never find the lights and shadows on an object equally warm or equally cool, but there is always an interplay between these two qualities with every change of light and atmosphere. We must first of all, therefore, make up our mind on this point with regard to our picture.

There is a false conception rife among many people which supposes the glaring and positive tints to be colour as opposed to the negative and subtle ; whereas we find that the infinite variety of greys and blues and other negative

tones can be as full of colour-expression as the most violent reds and yellows, and that the introduction of black can lend distinction to and enrich a scheme of colour. Again, it is erroneous to suppose that the colour in a fine picture must necessarily cover a large scale. It may be evolved with a very limited palette as easily as with a large range of pigments. In fact, the use of too many colours is a constant danger to the painter and leads him into unnecessary difficulties, tempting him to localise rather than to generalise, and put down broadly what he sees as a whole. It is a simple platitude to remark that the artist must paint as much as he sees, yet all the fumbling and much of the bad colour in painting comes from trying to see a little more.

In the manipulation of paint we find that the actual order in which oil-colours are blended can vary and alter their resultant tints. We take white as a foundation on our palette, and to this we add various colours to make up a certain tone. These colours are both transparent and opaque, and we find that an indiscriminate admixture results in muddy technique. Whereas, if we blend the opaque and heavier pigments with the white before adding the transparent colours, we avoid this false and heavy tonality. In both cases we have used the same colours and in like quantity, but the former has resulted

in dirty colour which is quite different from the fresh, clean quality of the latter mixture. Again, certain colour-results cannot be obtained by blending, but only by glazing one pigment upon another, or by juxtaposition, where colours placed side by side make a cleaner and truer impression on the eye from a certain distance than could be suggested by their mixture. I shall speak of the changes that can take place in water-colours later.

We must realise that every combination of colour affects our emotions in a special way, and so forms one of the endless problems which colour can present to the painter. We know that each colour conveys certain appeals to the subconscious mind, which, though it has no direct or intellectual expression, acts strongly on our emotions. We find such colours as vivid red or orange exciting, stimulating, and eventually fatiguing in their influence, whereas green and blue, pearl-colour and grey are restful in an emotional sense. Every colour is individually in touch with our susceptibility, but certain combinations of colour have an even stronger hold on our emotions. These links, though powerful, are indeterminate, their formula escapes us. The stained-glass windows of the thirteenth century appeal strongly to our imagination. We find ourselves powerfully influenced by their marvellous riot and intensity

of colour. These windows hand down to us in crystallised form the expression of their creator's mystic emotion, yet we cannot mentally define this impression. In certain great pictures there is this suggested element, apart from all that form and colour-harmony can express, which affects our emotional sense and carries further for us the true *motif* of the picture.

If we consider that the highest art should suggest more than it can express, we must realise the important part that colour plays in all fine painting. If drawing and form represent all that is demonstrable and intellectual in painting, we may assume that colour is the emotional and psychic side. Here we touch on the very fundament of art, which is far removed from any intellectual competence, and apart from the most consummate craftsmanship. It is outside the region of material things—we may call it the creator's soul or susceptibility—what we will. We only know it is the force which brought the wonder into the work of the early Primitives, the emotional glory into the stained glass of Chartres Cathedral. It is the enchantment of great music and poetry apart from their technique and style, apart from all that lies within the confines of definite thought. Beyond is the inexplicable country of emotion which stretches nearer to the mount of transfiguration.

CHAPTER VII

METHODS AND MATERIALS

IN discussing various methods of modern water-colour there is a danger of being dogmatic, of laying stress on one particular system to the exclusion of all the rest. It should, however, be obvious that the means is only justified by the end, and that any method is right and legitimate that attains what it sets out to accomplish.

We may broadly assume that the usual system employed by the best exponents of modern water-colour is a direct application of colour to wet paper, combined with an infinite variety of treatment, such as washing-out, pumice-stoning, sponging, scraping, etc., as suggested by individual temperament.

The chief difficulty of this method is to continue to keep the paper wet and the colour not too moist to hold; but apart from this trouble, it has endless advantages to recommend it. A wash of wet paint on dry paper results in a hard-edged stain, which cannot be removed or altered. We find in the wet method that the paint is

more workable and under our command, and can quite easily be removed if required.

We may judge of the importance of direct work by experiment. Let us take blue, yellow, rose, and join these three colours side by side in three strong, full-brush loads, on wet paper. Then place the same amount of these colours on another portion of the paper, but apply the colour gradually and in many touches. When the paper is dry, we shall find that the direct application of these paints has resulted in clean, strong colour. But in the second example, the colours have lost in crispness, force, and brilliancy.

The next important consideration is the ground on which to paint. This should be a handmade, thick, linen paper, of medium-grained surface, tough enough to withstand any reasonable amount of vigorous painting and washing-out. We shall find that Whatman paper takes colour beautifully if painted *à premier coup*, but is not strong enough to stand much wear and tear. As the conscious avoidance of this may lead to finnicked execution, it will be safer to rely on tougher paper, such as Arnold's unbleached, or the better quality of paper made by the Old Water-Colour Society.

We may consider the following a sound test for a paper : if, after it has been worked on and the paint has dried, we can get it quite clean



Size of drawing, 12 x 16.

THE VILLAGE FAIR

From the water-colour by Romilly Fedden.

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again with soap and a scrubbing-brush, and in such condition that it makes a good ground for a new picture.

The water-colour block, in any shape or form, should be avoided at all costs, as it not only cockles and takes colour badly, but the paper used in its manufacture is too often of inferior quality. Surely with a medium which presents such difficulties as water-colour it is worth while to take advantage of every aid, to order properly strained paper from the colourman, or to soak our paper in a bath and stretch it ourselves with the help of drawing-pins or tacks on a few old canvasses or panelled boards.

In the choice of brushes, an assortment of red sable and hog-hair should last for years, if carefully chosen from the stock of a good maker. Brushes often require to be used for a long time before they get into condition. Water and a grindstone, though not as efficacious as time and use, will often quickly improve a flabby brush, and old hog brushes which have been used for oil painting (if their cones are simply worn and the hairs have not spread or separated) are invaluable as water-colour tools. Brushes that are flat or filbert-shaped will probably be found most useful. It is not only necessary to have big sables, that will wash water or colour quickly on to the paper, but brushes that will remove colour readily and forcibly, and other brushes

stiff and stumpy enough to take out a high light when necessary.

It is advisable to have a good supply of water, which may be used in a big jar for studio work. For sketching out of doors a large india-rubber ball will be found useful; this with a circular piece cut out of it forms a large cup, which may be suspended from the easel by a string passed through two holes bored in its rubber rim. This contrivance is light to carry, holds plenty of water, and will fold into a small compass when travelling.

The only important points with regard to the easel are that it should be simple in construction, solid and steady, and that it should enable the painter to adjust his work at any angle. That insecure and flimsy type of easel which, when it holds the drawing-board at all, is only capable of sustaining it in one vertical position, enormously increases the difficulty of work.

Now we come to the question of colours, and here it may be helpful to point out the importance of not stinting the palette as to quantity. The quality of the paint is important, but the first necessity is to have enough of it. Make up your mind how much you will need, and then squeeze out just double that amount.

Colour is the one thing that the water-colour painter cannot afford to economise in. He can make a good sketch with one brush and three

colours, so long as he has these colours in sufficient quantity.

Your paints must be moist and capable of easy manipulation, for these reasons. Colour in tubes is always more satisfactory than in pans or cakes. When colour hardens, it is always possible to moisten it with glycerine or a few drops of warm distilled water, and so bring it again into a workable condition.

Before discussing the selection of useful colours, it may be as well to touch on one or two which have received a bad name as being fugitive and unsatisfactory. For years painters have employed the expensive cadmium yellows, which, though not so easy of manipulation as the chromes, have had the reputation of being infinitely more reliable and permanent. We must realise that all colours are unreliable and subject to change when adulterated. Recent tests have now proved that the despised chromes can hold their own with the cadmiums and that the latter seem as sensitive to harmful admixture as the former. Even the old rock of stability, yellow ochre, can play, we find, the most surprising tricks in company with vermilion and emerald green. It will probably be safer to substitute a very light red for vermilion on our palette and to discard bitumen, vandyke brown, indigo, and antwerp blue, together with all the cochineal lakes and copper greens. Emerald

green is undoubtedly a dangerous colour, but it is used by many painters as it can be easily handled and, if introduced with care as regards its action on other pigments, forms a useful and brilliant colour.

We should choose a first-class colour-maker, test, prove, and then stick to the colours which suit us best. Fortunately, the lead factor is not present in water-colour, and the oil painter has more reason to distrust the permanence of his paint than the water-colourist. Of late years there has been a great improvement in the selection, grinding, and mixing of water-colours, and many new and valuable pigments have been discovered. Modern work should therefore outlive much of the past in brilliancy and colour-fastness; but the Raphael and Leonardo cartoons are in themselves a lasting proof of the permanence and durability of this medium. It is impossible to select a list of colours which will suit everyone, but the following table gives a general, if over-full, number in which the student may safely experiment and then discard the colours he finds he can dispense with :

FULL TABLE OF USEFUL COLOURS

YELLOW—Yellow ochre, lemon yellow, aureolin, chromes and cadmiums, transparent golden ochre.

GREEN—Veridian (transparent oxide of chromium), terra verte, emerald green.

BLUE—Cobalt, french ultramarine, permanent blue, cerulean, ultramarine ash-grey.

RED—Light red, pale light red, rose madder, alazerin crimson, madder carmine, red chalk.

ORANGE—Madder orange, cadmium orange.

BROWN—Raw and burnt sienna, umber.

BLACK—Ivory black.

Over and above these colours, charcoal often holds an important place in modern water-colour painting. Not only is it used in drawing previous to the application of colour, but it can be superimposed upon paint to lower a value or accentuate a form. It blends easily with a wash of colour, which serves to fix it upon the paper. The great advantage of charcoal is that it is never dirty and never creates the heavy tonalities which so often result from thick painting with dark and opaque pigments.

This brings us to the vexed question of body-colour. The student will always find that chinese white is a dangerous resort in time of trouble, and will never be of any help to him in patching up a bad piece of painting. When water-colour is mixed with an opaque medium,

it is apt to trespass on the confines of oil painting, losing its own individuality and purity and gaining no new power. Some painters, however, have used white satisfactorily in loosening up a "tight" piece of painting, using pure body-colour in spots to break edges and working it here and there across hard outlines and then, when the white is dry, repainting over it with transparent colour. It has undoubtedly a legitimate use in this respect ; also in increasing brilliancy when overlaid with transparent colour, and again in varying the quality of paint. The use of body-colour presents so many difficulties and, if misapplied, becomes such a stumbling-block, that perhaps it is best for most of us to dispense with it altogether.

Among the very few water-colour painters who have consistently made use of body-colour, without sacrificing the transparency and subtlety of their medium, was the late Mr. Brabazon. Although this consummate master often used white throughout a whole sketch, it was not mixed in or allowed to worry his colour. We find the "breaking" quality of body-colour throughout his work, and transparent colour superimposed. His work was so direct that a single brush-stroke containing body and transparent colour blended one upon the other but did not mix. Speaking generally, we may conclude that opaque white can only be helpful to

the water-colour painter when used with, but not in, his colours.

In reference to what has already been said on the subject of direct painting, we must realise that water-colour loses a degree of warmth and tone in the process of drying, and that every subsequent wash of water over the painting tends to make it even colder. Again, certain of our most essential pigments in drying-out, work up through those above them. Cobalt blue is a most flagrant example of this—with rose madder superimposed, cobalt will come through the madder and dry with a false bloom which is utterly different from the tone and colour as originally applied to the paper. We find that only the cold colours have this assertive peculiarity, so it follows that it is safer to start out to paint rather with a warm than a cold tendency. It is a simple matter to make a water-colour colder, but when we begin to place hot paint on the top of cold we land ourselves in endless technical difficulties. Of course, if we could be sure of painting absolutely direct, of receiving each touch upon our palette and applying it exactly to the paper, never going twice over the same ground, then this point would not be so important. Needless to say, your aim should not be to arrive at your result in two paintings, but direct—*à premier coup*. If, however, there is a possibility of a second

touch anywhere, you will obtain better results by cooling down, than by trying to add hot colour to cold. Moreover, there is a general tendency to paint too cold out of doors, especially in sunlight. In the open we are enveloped in the sunshine and are therefore impressed by the contrasts made by cool shadows, but these passages are only cold in relation to the warmth of the whole. The warm light which radiates over everything makes our work look warmer than it really is. After all, we are presumably painting our picture to be seen eventually, not in sunlight, but in the cool light of an interior.

As has been stated, the technical difficulty in direct painting on a wet ground is to keep the paper sufficiently moist, and at that degree of absorbency in which the colours blend reticently, but do not run. This applies especially to work on a big scale. In the case of a small sketch the difficulty is very much decreased. Here the paper may be well soaked in a bath and then placed on a piece of slate, when it will retain its moisture for some hours, or, if the weather is warm and dry, a little glycerine added to the surface of the wet paper will further delay its drying.

Now, as to the application of the paint, let us suppose we are making a sketch of a landscape. The slate to which the wet paper adheres being

at a convenient and slightly tilted angle, we start at the top and run in our sky, taking off and putting on paint, adjusting our values and colours. Then into these we paint our distance, thus avoiding any hard edge, but insisting on the force of any line that is strong, and notifying where a line is lost or partially obliterated. From the horizon we work on to the middle distance, comparing our relative tones one with another and remembering that each colour borrows some of the strength from the one above it; that everything will dry out a tone higher than that in which it is applied to the paper, and that then colour which is dirty and opaque will appear black and infinitely more discouraging than when it was first painted. So we work downwards to the foreground.

If the result is successful and in any degree a faithful interpretation of nature, we shall of necessity have used our brains and have made many mental calculations while we were putting on colour. But here, the technical troubles were not very great. We were able to preserve a wet ground to work on from our first touch to our last. In painting a large picture these difficulties are infinitely increased. It is impossible to keep the whole surface wet and everything going at once. We can only avoid "tight" painting and hard edges by working piecemeal and by damping paper as we go.

The importance here is to accustom our eyes to white paper, or rather to learn not to be affected by it. This is a habit which may readily be acquired by practice. The prevalent idea is immediately to get rid of white paper with colour-washes ; but if these colour-washes are true in value, the picture is finished and ready for its frame, and if they are not true, they are more disturbing to the eye of the painter than the plain white paper, and, further, they have impaired the freshness of its texture. The pristine quality of a new sheet of linen paper is so delightful that the number of bad water-colours in the world becomes surprising. We are forced, however, to spoil lots of good paper, if we would attain any proficiency in the handling of colour, although its wholesale destruction is unnecessary. It is quite a simple matter with the help of a sponge and some soap to remove all colour from a thick sheet of paper, and then it is ready for a second painting.

To become conversant with paint and to obtain quality in water-colour it is necessary to practise endlessly. The student is so often engaged with painting "subjects" that he never finds time to experiment with his medium and to discover its capabilities and limitations. He would obtain much better results if he laid aside his picture for a while and simply played with paint, seeing how best he could manipu-

late his colours, how to remove a high light expeditiously, or add directly a strong touch of paint to the paper. There is a precise moment when wet paper is in a certain state to bring about an exact result on the paint which is then applied to it. It should be the endeavour of the water-colourist to study every phase of his medium, to foresee what will result from every condition of the paper on which he is working, what will follow each various method of laying on colour. These are the tricks of the trade if you will, but they are part of the necessary equipment of the painter. What appears as a "fluke" in the quality of a fine piece of painting is rarely a chance blending and running together of paint, but is usually the result of knowledge and careful study.

There is no better way of mastering the difficulties of this medium and of studying pure colour within simple form than by painting flowers. In their luminosity of colour and vivid contrasts of tone they are eminently conducive to strong, direct painting. Here the student will perhaps derive most advantage in making quick studies and using the same flowers for only one sitting. He should paint the background together with the flowers, noting rapidly when they are lost and where they stand out strongly. For rapid, forceful practice and study, flowers are invaluable. But time is

wasted on a laboured flower-study done in mincing, finger-tipped fashion.

The water-colour painter must think out his work before commencing, and then paint rapidly, vigorously, and, above all, know when to leave off. When he has carried his painting to the point of his capabilities, he should hesitate. Beyond lie innumerable over-touches, which, although they may delight some of his relations, will undoubtedly spoil his work. If he is of slow and careful temperament, he will probably find more scope in oil as a medium than in water-colour, which essentially requires mental and manual dexterity. It might even be helpful to the water-colour student first to undergo a thorough training in the use of oils, with the careful exactitude and study of relative values which this would entail. Therein he would have a sound preparation for the more difficult and elusive medium which would supersede it. Many of our first water-colourists have gone through a long apprenticeship to oil before taking up their ultimate means of expression. Whatever medium the student employs, he can only succeed in it through endless perseverance and hard work. In urging him to see broadly and paint directly in water-colour, we should at the same time warn him against imagining that the best technique of the modern school is in any sense haphazard. He will find it is



Size of drawing, 13 x 15.

GERANIUMS

From the water-colour by Romilly Fedden.

[To face page 104.]

backed by the hard work and study that he himself must undergo. The true Impressionist knows all the form and detail he is able to eliminate. It is therefore impossible for the student to begin where the artist leaves off. He must study for himself, seeing nature as simply as his own eyes will permit, and gradually increasing his breadth of vision.

Above all, he must never let his admiration of a certain style lead him consciously to imitate it. In so doing, we take only the superficial exterior, and lose the underlying character and individuality.

CHAPTER VIII

FURTHER NOTES ON WATER-COLOUR

SEE simply. Start strongly. Use plenty of colour. Realise breadth. Emphasise character. Paint direct. Look after the big masses and the details can take care of themselves. Think of the general colour-scheme before local tints. You can't get everything in water-colour, but try to get something and do it bang off.

Don't hesitate. Don't let your brush keep saying, "I think"; make it say, "I know." Don't polish. Don't fumble—that is, don't go dabbing and dabbing at one spot. Put down your brush-load once and then leave it. One brush mark is better than two; and if you must have two, don't have twenty.

But you will learn most from the people who sit on camp-stools and do "picturesque bits," who through changing effects continue in "quaint corners" and niggle at water-colour blocks, leaning back from time to time to regard

their work, head on one side, tip of brush in mouth. These are one reiterated "don't."

The best way to learn to paint in water-colour is to practise in charcoal. This sounds like a paradox, but it is really a truth. You all find that values are your greatest difficulty in water-colour. Charcoal is the most wonderful and sympathetic medium and the one in which values are most easily expressed; so, if you now and then substitute it for colour and use your thumb or a stump instead of a brush, you will gain no end of help.

You are not using enough colour, and you are painting too wet. If the surface of your paper is saturated with water, you must put on your colour dry enough to hold on it. If you put wet colour on wet paper, it naturally all ends in a puddle on the floor.

Don't be afraid of your subject. Never mistake timidity for delicacy. The former cannot exist in fine water-colour painting. The most subtle and delicate passage of colour is brought about by direct, masterful painting, and not by undecided pecking with a paint-brush.

You have made your sky terminate at the horizon. Try not to see your sky as a cut-out

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piece of blue calico, but as a transparent atmosphere which runs right through your picture and envelops you as well as that absurd tree in the middle distance.

You say you don't see that sky warm. Then don't paint it warm because I think it warm. Never ignore your own impressions.

But I can't think why you put in that tree, as it has no use, and only blocks your composition. Because you find trees and things in nature is no reason for putting them into a picture. Nature is so busy being fertile and efflorescent that she dumps things anyhow and expects some common sense and discrimination from the painter.

Don't bother about the picturesque! Values, strength, and lost edges are the only things you have to think about. "Pretty bits" are never worth while.

Centralise your work. There is always one value darker than anything else, and one light lighter than anything else. Find them and put them down, bang! If you see two values equally dark in your composition, sacrifice one to the other. You must at all costs centralise.

Don't think so much about colour. If your paints worry you, cut down your palette and

work for a time with three colours only. Then paint broadly, simply, solidly.

Good colour arrives by itself.

Instead of trying to finish up, try to broaden out—that is, try to simplify as a whole. Try to see your subject, not a figure and then a background. Paint the two together. That figure does not exist without its background.

You are painting this street as if you were making a map. Try to remember you are not drawing out a plan for an architect. Leave out, alter, adjust, if by so doing you can improve your composition. You won't paint that house well because you plaster it with facts, because you insist on its exact number of windows and doors, but because you insist on its general character.

Try to paint in the studio as forcefully and freshly as you sketch out of doors. Don't allow your work to discourage you. Get the better of it sometimes. There comes a time in the painting of a picture when everything seems to go wrong, and this is just the time when you may be able to learn no end, so go on. Give your work one half-hour more. See where you can simplify and pull it together—knock it about. Then, if everything fails, you can scrub it all out

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and so make a clean surface on which to start again.

In painting this head, go for the big masses. This passage of forehead is uniform and simple. It is only when you open your eyes too wide that you begin to make it look like a patch-work quilt. Try to see colour in mass, not in detail. Look at the big luminous quality of the light on that face. It is untroubled. You can find no end of half-tones, if you look long enough, which will ruin its simplicity.

Keep some of your past work always by you ; not necessarily to amuse your friends, but as documents of reference. You turn up a portfolio of old sketches thinking you will burn the lot. You find most of them worse than you anticipated, but quite possibly one among the number is much better than you expected. It has many faults which you have since avoided, but here you find a quality which is lacking in your more recent work. This you can insist on when you again start painting.

In these days the wealthy amateur who is trying to learn to paint is constantly cutting into the picture-market, selling to friends and relations productions which no one but a wealthy amateur could possibly hope to get rid of. Some of you are making painting your profession, and

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are dependent on your work for bread and butter ; but there are others to whom this is far from a necessity and who have no moral right to trade on their position in order to dispose of their immature work.

Portraiture in water-colour presents almost insurmountable difficulties. The water-colour portrait that is at the same time a work of art is practically unknown. This medium is capable of suggesting a vivid impression of a particular person. What most people demand of a portrait is that it shall be a careful, finished, and realistic likeness, and for this purpose water-colour is unsuitable. It is not the best medium in which to render definite exactitude. No, if you must paint portraits, paint them in oil, which is an easier and better vehicle through which to express realistic precision. No end of nonsense has been talked about portraiture being the highest form of art. It is undoubtedly the form of art which pays best, but these terms are not synonymous. The great painter who paints portraits is great in spite of being a portrait-painter. The susceptibility of the artist must to a certain extent be affected by that of his sitter. The painter grows to know only too well what the average sitter wants. He is constantly under the temptation to please, to sacrifice his own ideals to the demands of the

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public. Sargent has painted many fine portraits because he was strong enough to withstand this influence, but there are numberless other painters, men whose early work showed infinite promise, who have since been ruined by portrait painting.

Some charming portraits have been made wherein water-colour has been used very sparingly, but these are not paintings in water-colour, but drawings in charcoal or other monotone medium to which touches of colour have been added to heighten the effect. This combination of mediums has brought into existence some beautiful results, not only in portrait and landscape but in design and poster work.

You have got to paint broadly, but that does not mean you must paint carelessly. We must bring all our faculties to bear—brain and muscle and sight—in order to make our work just as well done as it is possible for us to do it. Above all, we must enjoy the doing. Duty, what is known as “conscientious work,” has never made a good sketch. We must enjoy making sketches, and then possibly a few people may enjoy looking at them.

Genius has been called “the infinite capacity for taking pains.” It is rather the infinite capacity for taking pleasure.

Compare the water-colours of Brabazon, De Wint, Thevenot, Sargent, Shepperson, Brangwyn, Melville, Allen, Goodwin, Curnow Vosper, Francis James, and many others. Notice their methods and differences, but never copy them.

Never copy a picture in the same medium in which it is painted. By so doing you will only imitate its surface work and technique, without grasping the mental work that went to its making.

You must give up all idea of "success" if you are going to do good work. If you happen to be an artist and live up to your ideals, you cannot expect popular appreciation. Why should you? "Getting on" has nothing whatever to do with art. If more art-students realised this fact there would be fewer painters grumbling to-day because they are unsuccessful. No great painter has ever made what is popularly known as a "success of his profession," with the exception of those who happened to be court painters or portrait painters, and so could flatter the vanity of their sitters or that of their monarch. You won't find one! Yes, X— gets big prices for his pictures, but that is not popular appreciation. His work is quite unknown to the general public. He has a small coterie of admirers, among whom he has chanced to find three or four rich men who compete with each other for his pictures. Millet had

about as large a following, but no luck, so he starved. Manet, Turner, Blake, Corot, Sisley, did they gain public recognition? Sisley the Englishman died in penury, and after his death the French nation erected a statue to his memory at Moret. Examples are both endless and needless. But those of you who are making painting your profession must get over all ideas of fame and fortune if you are going to stick to art. Here is a letter from a man in which he asks: "Am I justified in encouraging my son to take up art as a profession?" Then at the end he adds: "My son has no private means, and I cannot see my way to making him an allowance." Of course, under the circumstances there is only one answer: "Make him anything rather than a painter." It won't be necessary to add that if he happens to be an artist no lack of encouragement will prevent him from painting; and on the other hand, if he happens to be a tradesman by nature and selects painting as his profession, he might quite possibly become an Academician and turn out important "problem" pictures which would delight not only his father's heart but that of the public.

Remember that we can never consciously vulgarise our work to suit the appreciation of the public and not suffer for it. Every time we

substitute prettiness for character, artificiality for truth; every time we smooth down our view of nature to meet other people's requirements, we not only falsify our own art, but foster a false conception of art in others.

There are no fixed rules by which to learn to paint. You must each work from your own convictions and in your own individual way. We are only right just so far as our own impressions take us. Beyond that we must have faith in ourselves and our ideals.

Water-colour is the most difficult medium in the world, but it is only half as difficult if you keep a firm hold. Once let it feel you are afraid of it, and you lose all control.

Get all the criticism you can on your work, that is, the criticism of painters. But don't let anyone impose his personality on yours. Severe criticism from a painter is worth anything, so long as it does not dishearten.

Fits of depression are common to everyone who thinks for himself. We must look upon them simply as the price we all pay for the joy of creation. Art should teach us some of the philosophy of life, the necessity of shadow as well as light. It is absurd to imagine that because we get discouraged we shall never arrive. It is more than probable that we shall never arrive, but we may get some of the way.

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